

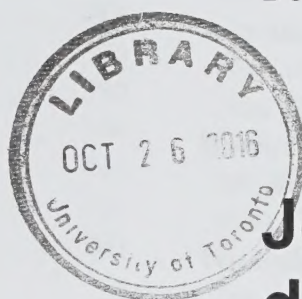


**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 41^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 18 October 2016

Mardi 18 octobre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 18 October 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 18 octobre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING STUDENTS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 PROTÉGEANT LES ÉLÈVES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 17, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance et la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Good morning, everyone.

Interjections: Good morning.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, it's appropriate that we say good morning. It's like being in school here with all the pages.

As a former teacher for over 20 years, I have some interesting reflections about Bill 37. I would like to share some of the highlights of this legislation that's before us. The bill is called the Protecting Students Act and, if passed, the bill would make important amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act.

Most people don't know unless—if you're in the teaching profession, you would know about the Ontario College of Teachers. It's an autonomous governing body that deals with teachers' standards and proper accreditation. It's also a disciplinary body that deals with issues with teachers in schools.

The interesting thing about the Ontario College of Teachers is that it really tries to raise the standards and expectations of our teachers across the province of Ontario. We sometimes take for granted the critical importance that our teachers, schools, school volunteers, parent groups and CSAC groups play in education across this province, and this bill is basically trying to update and ensure that the Ontario College of Teachers and its focus are up to today's standards, you might say. It builds on achieving excellence for teachers, ensuring equity and fairness, promoting well-being and enhancing public confidence in education.

I don't know if you are familiar with the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence, Mr. Speaker, being from Chatham–

Kent, the beautiful part of Ontario where all the soybeans, corn and tomatoes come from, but in Eglinton–Lawrence we have a very interesting phenomenon in that the public schools in Eglinton–Lawrence, many of them, are in some of the highest-priced neighbourhoods—probably, in part of my riding, one of the highest-priced neighbourhoods you'll find anywhere in Canada. It's not unusual to pay \$2 million, \$3 million, \$4 million, \$5 million, \$6 million, \$7 million, \$8 million, \$9 million or \$10 million for a home, and that's another issue about home affordability.

But the interesting thing is that many parents will want to live in parts of Eglinton–Lawrence near one of our great public schools. In other words, in some communities, you will see where people will buy an expensive, exclusive home and then send their kids to private school. Private schools—I don't know if you are aware of it, Mr. Speaker. It's not unusual to pay \$20,000, \$30,000 for tuition for one year, whereas with a good public school system, we have people basically lining up to enrol their sons and daughters in our public schools.

Our public schools in Eglinton–Lawrence are generally filled to the rafters. You almost can't get in. There are waiting lists to get in. I'm talking about schools like John Ross Robertson, John Wanless, Blessed Sacrament school, Lawrence Park Collegiate, Forest Hill Collegiate and John Polanyi public high school. These schools, again, are public schools, yet people will pay the high price of real estate to be near one of those public schools, to be in that area, so they can send their kids to schools like John Wanless, John Ross Robertson, and Blessed Sacrament. That is a very positive reflection on the quality of education that students are getting in our public schools, because we have involved parents and we have excellent teachers and excellent principals. Therefore, we have this great desire to attend these public schools.

Those public schools, again, are part of the public school system. You don't have to pay that \$20,000, \$30,000 to go to one of the private schools. That's a reflection on the excellent quality of teachers we have in our education system, whether it be the public board, the French board, or the Catholic board.

They are not perfect in terms of delivering what is described as quality education, but on the other hand, they have an open-door policy. In a private school system, they can pick and choose their students, so they won't take the struggling student. They won't take the student who is maybe academically challenged. But our public schools will accept all comers, so that means our teachers have to deal with the reality of their community. They take in the bright students, the students that are

struggling, the students with special needs. They take all comers. Yet despite that, where they can't pick and choose like the private schools, they achieve great results.

In my riding, in the Fraser Institute grading of schools across Canada, some of my schools, like John Wanless and John Ross Robertson, come up in the top 10, beating out the best private schools in the country in their scores.

Those are the types of things you're not going to read about in the newspapers or see on television, but those are the behind-the-scenes efforts of all of our teachers, our school boards and our parents that are making our public schools great places to learn.

In this legislation here, what we're trying to do is to ensure that the best standards are met by our teachers, to reinforce these standards and to ensure that parents know that there is a body like the Ontario College of Teachers that works at this on a daily basis behind the scenes.

It's not a glamorous job. It's not one, as I said, that makes the headlines unless something, an abnormality or something, goes on that's out of whack. But generally, this is the day-to-day work of the Ontario College of Teachers that is going on and has gone on, and now we're just trying to update that to ensure that there's a proper regulatory body in place with a disciplinary system. As you know, whether it's students or whether it's teachers, there are always, as I said, exceptions to the rule, and we have to be ready to protect the greater student body. We have to ensure that we have these standards in place.

0910

The college has had very robust, you might say, agendas over the past years. I know that a few years ago we had the esteemed Judge Patrick LeSage, who put forward the report with many recommendations, looking at the disciplinary practices of the college of teachers and also the modernization of the college. Justice LeSage is one of the most renowned jurists, certainly, in Canada, and he put forth these recommendations. So the government has continued to work with the college of teachers to address all of 49 recommendations of Justice LeSage.

Now, as you know, most recommendations can be very technical, can be much more challenging than you think. So it's not as if, when these recommendations come forward, they could be introduced overnight. But they are being introduced and phased in to the process of the Ontario College of Teachers. This is an ongoing activity, and this is something that would, again, I think, benefit the teaching profession.

Ultimately, when you have a teaching profession that is meeting high standards, obviously students benefit, but this is not something that day-to-day parents deal with because, as you know, day-to-day parents are rushing to get their children to school, get them to after-school programs, going to work. You know, it is very, very difficult for parents to—especially in today's world, it's difficult to get a stay-at-home parent. It just can't happen, especially when you're paying all the bills and you're trying to take care of your job and career at the same

time. So therefore, parents rely on schools, rely on the college of teachers to ensure that the focus in our schools is appropriate for their sons and daughters and that this is the highest of standards. That's something that parents really don't get involved in unless there's some circumstance where there needs to be a parental intervention, which happens from time to time.

As you know, our principals across this province deal with this kind of issue on a daily basis, and they have a very, very difficult job as principals, because they're not only managing staff—they could have 10, 20, 30 teachers and staff. I mentioned here the other day that one of my granddaughters goes to a school, Runnymede public school in Toronto, where there are over 1,100 children in that public school. The interesting thing is that people are lined up to go to that school. It's one of the best schools in the city. Despite its size—I think they have seven junior kindergartens. It's in the Bloor West area of Toronto.

People want to go to that school because it has such good teachers and such good results. And so people want to go to this public school. You can imagine—I don't know how many; I think they've got five or six vice-principals in that school and a number of principals. But you can imagine you, as a principal, being the chief administrator in a school with 1,100 children. We are challenged enough as parents when we're trying to deal with our two or three or four kids in our household. We've got so many interesting activities our children get into. You can imagine being responsible for a school of 1,100 little boys and girls. Every day, they come in and they're scraping their knees, they're having issues with learning mathematics etc. That's what goes on in our schools across the province of Ontario. Every day, there are families depending on our schools to give their children the best possible tools as they grow up.

That's why this legislation attempts to continue to ensure that there are the proper standards in place to protect students, protect schools and protect families in an educational setting. That is what this bill is trying to do. It's trying to ensure that when something is off the rails in terms of a teacher's behaviour there are rules in place and discipline in place to take care of that.

It is not an easy thing to do in any profession to impose mandatory, arbitrary rules and benchmarks. It has to be done in collaboration with the teachers. It has to be done in collaboration with the principals and the Ontario College of Teachers. That is the process and that is the framework of this bill that is before us today. The disciplinary processes are never easy, as you know, in any profession, but they have to be there. I think parents expect that if there is something that is not kosher, as they say, there is a responsibility of some disciplinary body to intervene. That's what the Ontario College of Teachers is doing. So this legislation tries to enhance that regulatory regime that the Ontario College of Teachers deals with.

While I'm here talking about education, as I mentioned, there are schools in one end of my riding in which

the property values are quite high, but then people of very moderate means live in another end of my riding. In some of the areas around Avenue Road and Yonge Street, I have some fabulous schools. I mentioned Ledbury school, which is another great public school in my riding.

Also, I have a school called Joyce Public School. Joyce Public School is in an area that has really been through a challenging, at-risk period, but because of the principal and the staff at Joyce Public School, and the trustee, it is one of the most sought-after schools in the city of Toronto. At Joyce Public School, the teachers have put together a program—Cheryl Paige, the principal, was amazing. She put together a program of teaching math through music. She combined math and music. I'll tell you, the test results and the achievement of the kids in that school were just through the roof. So you have people who may not live in the area of Joyce Public School but want to send their kids to Joyce Public School, which is, as I said, in an area where people are of very moderate means, and half to three quarters of the students come from a family whose parents don't have English as a first language.

The beauty about walking into these schools is—I don't know whether you have this in Chatham-Kent, but I'm sure you have a variety of different situations in Chatham-Kent. Just this past Christmas, I was at a school where my brother teaches. It's called Archbishop Romero high school. It's just outside of my riding. It's in the Rogers Road and Weston Road area. Again, almost 90% of the kids are sons and daughters of recent immigrants. In that school, they were doing a fundraiser for a local charity. Every student was from a different country, spoke a different language—every student. If you look at the spectrum, you'll see they come from China, the Philippines, Ecuador, Mexico, Guatemala, Grenada—they come from everywhere. Every student is from a different background, yet all these students were coming together, raising money for a local charity, for a food drive, and all having a great deal of fun with their teachers and principal. Where else in the world could you find that but in Canada, in Ontario? You go to some of these other countries and they're very homogeneous, not to say they're bad. But I walk into these schools and, as I said, the whole world is represented.

0920

That teacher has to be cognizant of the cultural background and the language challenges of each and every student. That isn't easy. If you know that everybody is from Hamilton and they all come from Ancaster, you've got a certain—but even there, there's a lot of diversity coming. Everybody is moving to Hamilton, I hear. It's becoming the hot place in Canada to move to.

Just getting back to that challenge the teachers have, the diversity—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you very much for listening to me, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to compliment the member for Eglinton–Lawrence on his speech this morning. This Bill 37, the government's education bill, is the first piece of education legislation which the government has introduced in quite a long time. We support it and sincerely hope that students will be safer once these amendments to the Early Childhood Educators Act and the Ontario College of Teachers Act are passed into law.

There's another education matter that I need to address to the Minister of Education and her staff today, who I know are monitoring this debate. That is a concern I have received from a constituent, Jeff Baechler of Georgetown, which we repeatedly raised with the former Minister of Education. It deals with the accreditation of teachers, which of course falls under the responsibility of the Ontario College of Teachers.

Mr. Baechler writes that the implementation of the two-year teacher education program is unjust and inequitable. He has repeated the point that concurrent teacher education students, who are students simultaneously enrolled in two programs leading to two degrees, are being treated differently than students who are studying to be teachers via the consecutive teaching education route; in other words, seeking to obtain an undergraduate degree before they study for a bachelor of education degree. These concurrent education program students, if enrolled before 2015, are in effect exempted from the new two-year teacher education program, while the future teachers taking the consecutive education route must study for two years to receive their bachelor of education program.

We have repeatedly raised this issue with the government on Mr. Baechler's behalf. I appreciate the research he has done and I admire his persistence. At the very least, he is entitled to an unbiased review of his concern and a satisfactory explanation. I urge the new Minister of Education to review this matter with a view to seeking a solution which is fair both to concurrent and consecutive teaching education students, and respond to Mr. Baechler. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West and as the NDP education critic. I had an hour yesterday to discuss the bill before us, Bill 37, but there's always more to add so I'm happy to have the opportunity to do so.

The member from the government side spoke at length about schools in his riding and the importance of our education system and kids being safe while at school and how important that is to the students, to the parents and, frankly, it's important to the large majority of education workers. So I want to make it clear from the top that this legislation before us would actually only touch on a very, very small minority of educators. Most of them would not ever see any disciplinary action under this bill because most of our teachers—again, the large majority

of our teachers do a very, very good job of not only educating our children but taking good care of them and making sure that they're safe while at school.

I think an important parallel—because the member was speaking greatly about schools in his riding—is that when we're talking about the safety of students, we need to talk about not just those who are put in charge of the care of the students while they're in the buildings, but the actual condition of the buildings that students are in. Often those conditions are not safe.

We're looking at a \$15-billion repair backlog that the government is not addressing. We're finding heating and cooling issues in schools, so kids are cold or they're too hot and they're passing out. We're finding that roofs are failing, so we're having leaking roofs. In some extreme cases, roofs and ceilings are actually falling down in gymnasiums while students are in the gym.

I think the government needs to do a better job of actually taking care of the entire education system, rather than standing up and just talking a good talk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's the riding with the longest name because our people have the biggest hearts, the biggest hopes and the biggest dreams. You can tell I'm in politics.

I always enjoy the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and his wise words. I was particularly touched by his reference to not only Hamilton, but to kids from diverse backgrounds. I have always thought that we need to be measuring our success as a society by our kids' success in school, because that's fundamental to how they manage later in life.

The honourable member's wise words talked about a broadened approach to finding some creative ways to bring peace to the schoolyard and to deal with discipline in a collaborative way with our teacher friends, all the time celebrating that virtually all of our teachers have come through this collaborative arrangement to see children not as children of modest means, but rather as boys and girls of unlimited potential. As long as we can continue to support that, we'll do well.

The best way to do that, of course, is to work collaboratively with our educators and those who have a profound interest in making sure that our kids succeed. The best way to do that, of course, is to ensure confidently that they're protected and that the recommendations of Justice LeSage are implemented as quickly as possible. The honourable member drew attention to that, and he deserves our praise for his wise words.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I commend the member for bringing this forward. I really wish it was already in place. It was actually introduced back in 2013 after a report by the Honourable Patrick J. LeSage made 49 recommendations. It's interesting that here we are in 2016 and it's still not through, sadly. But at the end of the day, as a caucus, I believe we're prepared to support.

We have to have unequivocal responsibilities as a society to protect our children and students. There's absolutely no place for child exploitation in this province or in any part of our society, for that matter. We expect all individuals, regardless of profession, who engage in this abhorrent behaviour to be brought to justice.

We've actually suggested as well that there are some other potential amendments. One would be creating a public website that lists individuals who have had their certificate revoked for certain forms of sexual abuse or acts relating to child pornography. That way parents can go on and they can be assured in their own mind. That's the most important thing—making sure that the children are safe, first of all, in an environment that allows them to have that safe and comfortable feeling, but also allows parents, as we want to ensure that for our children, to know.

Any member of the college who is accused of an act of misconduct will be subject to immediate leave without pay. In lieu of transparency, unless the teacher has been the subject of death threats or the like, there will be a public hearing. If the act against the student is punishable under the Criminal Code for five years or greater, section 23 would include additional details such as the address of the member who committed the crime in order to serve and protect the public interest.

As I've said all along and as I believe, I hope this bill is trying to address the safety of the children. Ensuring there's an environment where they can thrive, grow and learn, obviously, is the most important fiduciary responsibility of all of us as legislators; but more importantly, it's all of us thinking as parents, what we would want for our children and our schools.

I'm pleased to see the members continuing to push it forward. As I said, I wish it was already in place. The 49 recommendations from Mr. LeSage are there. I hope that we can move this through. We'll monitor it in committee and support this bill when it comes to a vote.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for final comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to thank the members from Wellington–Halton Hills, Windsor West, Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their helpful comments.

I just was thinking, while I was speaking and hearing the comments—as I said, I was a teacher for 18 years in Toronto in the high school system. I was just recalling my father—the member from Windsor West mentioned it's not just teachers that make a great school. My father was a caretaker in a local school in Toronto. He had been a steelworker for many years, until the plant closed down. Then when my dad got a job as a caretaker, he thought he'd died and gone to heaven, from working in a foundry to working in a school. He just loved the job. He would work the night shift. That was the greatest job he ever had, and it was a joy for him, going to work every day.

I remember an incident. One time, a grade 6 teacher came up to me and said, "You know, your dad saved my teaching career." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I was just a beginning teacher, and I was having problems with disciplining the kids." Basically, the kids, as they can, can take over a classroom, so this new teacher was really in deep trouble. My dad heard of his concern, so my dad marched into the classroom one morning and to each student, he said, "If you don't behave and obey this teacher—I know each and every single one of your parents, and I'm going to tell them that you're not behaving. Believe me, your parents will take care of you if you don't behave." Ever since my dad, as the caretaker, marched in and read the riot act to help out this teacher, that teacher said the kids' behaviour totally turned around. So that was an interesting anecdote.

It takes more than just teachers. It takes the caretaker staff, the support staff. Everybody makes for a good school.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join the debate today with regard to Bill 37, Protecting Students Act. Of course, we all concur in this House that students are the future of our economy, of our communities and our families, to be straightforward. I'm going to just put that out there. We need to put every best effort forward to ensure that our most vulnerable are protected.

In that regard, the safety and security of our children and young people is a very serious matter. As policy-makers, we have an obligation to ensure that we do all we can to address potential threats to that security in a timely, responsible manner.

I'm going to talk about timeliness in a moment, because we need to give recognition where recognition is due. I'm pleased to say that the PC Party of Ontario recognized this early in the 2000s. I'm glad that finally, today, in 2016, we're getting back to seriously putting forward legislation that will make a difference. Because at the end of the day, when our students jump on the school bus or walk to school and enter that institution, we put our trust in our educators to ensure that our children are cared for, protected, nurtured and respected so that they ultimately can have the best learning environment possible.

As figures of authority, we look to teachers to guide our young people into the future in a positive, healthy way. As a result, teachers have a level of influence that is unmatched by any other profession. Most of our teachers understand that importance. There is responsibility and hard work to keep the confidence of parents and their charges. But when that trust is violated in extreme and profound ways, it has serious, long-lasting impacts for the student.

As I mentioned, to children, teachers are authority figures who have a significant degree of influence. They not only assign grades but report behaviour to parents. Students who are being exploited may thus feel pressure to comply with a teacher's demands, for fear of negative repercussions. For younger students, they may also fear

getting in trouble if they don't comply with their teacher's wishes.

At the end of the day, when we take a look across the province, we all agree in this House that our teachers are the most important resource. We all appreciate the good that they do in order to help our young people become productive, happy members of our communities.

In fact, as you may recall, I have many friends and family members myself who are part of the education system, both here at home in Ontario and abroad in places such as China, Kuwait, Thailand and South America, just to name a few. They work their butts off, Speaker, to ensure that their classrooms are the best environments possible. They have come forward with every best intention, but unfortunately, just like any basket—or bushel basket, I'll say—of apples, there unfortunately could be the potential bad one. So we do need legislation that addresses this particular issue, and Bill 37 does get to that.

As we take a look and drill down on Bill 37, we in the PC Party of Ontario wholeheartedly agree that this legislation is indeed needed. We're glad, as I mentioned before, to see the Liberals are finally taking steps to address such a serious subject.

As I hinted just moments ago, it was actually the PC Party of Ontario that established the groundwork on this matter, going all the way back to 2002, when former Minister of Education Janet Ecker introduced Bill 101, the Student Protection Act. At that time, Minister Ecker took steps to remove potential threats to children from the classroom by amending section 30 of the Education Act. Her particular work read as follows:

"On becoming aware that a teacher or temporary teacher who is employed by the board has been charged with or convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code (Canada) involving sexual conduct and minors, or of any other offence under the Criminal Code (Canada) that in the opinion of the board indicates that pupils may be at risk, take prompt steps to ensure that the teacher or temporary teacher performs no duties in the classroom and no duties involving contact with pupils, pending withdrawal of the charge, discharge following a preliminary inquiry, stay of the charge or acquittal, as the case may be."

I thank Janet Ecker for her efforts back in 2002, and I'm glad to see that the essence established at that time by the PC Party of Ontario has transcended the years and has finally landed in Bill 37.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that back in 2002, among several things, Bill 101, the Student Protection Act, also amended the Ontario College of Teachers Act with regard to the obligations of employers in reporting offences. At that time, it specifically stated:

"An employer shall promptly report to the college in writing when the employer becomes aware that a member who is or has been employed by the employer,

"(a) has been charged with or convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code (Canada) involving sexual conduct and minors;

“(b) has been charged with or convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code (Canada) that in the opinion of the employer indicates that students may be at risk of harm or injury; or

“(c) has engaged in conduct or taken action that, in the opinion of the employer, should be reviewed by a committee of the college.”

As you can see, Speaker, we on this side of the House absolutely take this matter seriously. Unfortunately, the government's earlier versions of this bill have been sidelined due to their other priorities. That's where it gets frustrating, Speaker. The very essence of Bill 37 needs to be embraced and championed through this House in a timely manner. But unfortunately, for instance, when the Premier introduced—actually, before I get to that, I want to just make sure everybody listening today understands that in the last 13 years, this particular piece of legislation has been introduced to this assembly no less than three times, beginning with Bill 103 in 2013, and again as Bill 200 in May just this year. Now, for the third time, we're debating it as Bill 37. Each time, the government failed to get this job done, but we're committed to a safe and protected environment for our students, so we want to see Bill 37 get right across the finish line this time around.

When I think about why Bill 200, introduced just this past spring, fell off the order paper, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that I feel it's very much a shame that the Premier's own self-interest caused this bill to die on the order paper the second time around when she prorogued this government in September. We may have been much further ahead on this issue had it not happened.

0940

I want to take a few minutes to share with you some headlines that emphasize how important it is that we treat this issue in a timely manner and get the job done once and for all. These headlines are sad, but it emphasizes the point that we've lost time on this bill and we need to get it done.

For instance, in the *Toronto Star* on July 2016, a headline was published: “Ottawa Teacher Charged with Sexual Assault of Student.”

In June 2016, in the *Toronto Sun*, a headline was published: “Peel Teacher Accused of Sex Assault of Student.”

In March 2016, in the *National Post*, there was an article and a student was quoted: “‘She Would Stalk Me’: Ottawa Teacher's Aide Pleads Guilty to Sexually Assaulting Male Student for Years.”

Another headline: “Teacher Charged with Sex-Related Offences Involving a Student.” That was published by CTV Ottawa in May 2016.

In April 2016, the *Ottawa Sun* published a headline that read, “Female Teacher with Ottawa Catholic School Board Charged with Sexual Assault on Student.”

In the *Windsor Star*, in the summer—July, specifically—we learned of another headline: “Windsor Elementary Teacher Charged with Sexual Assault.”

I think these headlines speak volumes about the effect that inaction can have.

Unfortunately, as I said, we have seen this bill come to the floor three times now, and unfortunately, when the legislation has not been acted upon in a timely fashion, we've had these headlines hit the papers. It's very, very sad. I think while the government delays and stalls progress on these changes as noted in Bill 37, the lives of real people, our children, our future, are being impacted in ways no child should have to experience.

I implore the government of the day to work with us to get this legislation through. It has been too long and it's time to get the job done.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you.

Education seems to be a file that this government stumbles on time and time again. I'm reminded of one example in particular from earlier this year when the former Minister of Education refused, for weeks, to provide families and students who benefit from demonstration schools with answers on whether or not they would remain open for the 2016-17 academic year. While the minister eventually agreed to keep them open and operating for another year, there was no offer for a long-term solution for families looking to plan for the future.

Again, I share this today because it's pertinent. Inaction creates instability, and our children, our future and their families deserve to have the respect and timely action that will make a difference in their learning environment and in their confidence in their future. Again, I impress upon this government: Let's get this job done. Let's work together. We can do this. Let's not let it die on the floor or let it get lost in the committee process.

There's another example that I'd like to share as well coming from my own riding of Huron-Bruce, and it impacts my friend's riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound as well. Again, Bill 37 is about enabling a secure learning environment for our young people, but I would be remiss at this time of the debate not to touch on the fact that a secure learning environment and the future of communities are dependent upon a government that understands the important pillar that education plays in all of our communities.

In the north end of our riding we're hearing a lot about the potential closure of Paisley Central School and Chesley District Community School. Chesley District is a K-to-12 school, and Paisley Central School is well-attended and there's economic development initiatives happening that show that growth is going to be happening in that community, propping up the enrolment levels at Paisley Central. We need to have proper attention paid to our institutions. The fact that we're talking about safe, secure learning environments for our students—I have a letter from Dale Steinhoff from Paisley. He touches on a couple of other elements in his letter that I would like to share with the floor at this time. He writes, “Unfortunately, the Paisley accommodation review, like those others recently held throughout Grey Bruce, appears to have a predetermined outcome and the views of the local electorate are paid very little heed.”

Again, my riding of Huron-Bruce actually takes in the hinterland, the greater Paisley area, if you will. The

school proper is in the great neighbouring riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Dale goes on to say that he has “every confidence that the administrators at the board office and the province have all their ducks neatly in a row to ensure that this closure is carried out.” It makes him concerned. He goes on to say, “It is unfortunate, but our pleas appear to be falling on deaf ears. I write this letter with the hope that there’s someone in a position of influence who appreciates that Paisley is on the verge of something very good and to close the school now would make absolutely no sense.”

It is shameful that this government has allowed our education system to fall into such disarray.

I would like to return to the bill and provide more background, if you will, on how we can amend and fix some of this frustration, address the disarray that this constituent addressed in his letter and talk about the proposed changes that we need to debate for Bill 37. We have to have a context of how all of this has come to be.

I know my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa provided a similar background yesterday, but I want to ensure that we’re all on the same page today. Here we go, in terms of the context. In 2011, the Ontario College of Teachers commissioned the Honourable Patrick LeSage, former Chief Justice of the Superior Court, to review its intake, investigation and discipline procedures and outcomes, and its dispute resolution programs.

Within these areas, Mr. LeSage was specifically asked to consider issues including communication and publication practices, impartiality and timeliness of adjudication, training and legal support, appropriateness of disciplinary outcomes, confidentiality and the handling of concerns about the college’s members. His 76-page report established 49 recommendations, which I am glad to see have all been included in Bill 37.

I want to focus on three of them that I believe are especially important. The first recommendation is 32, which states, “The penalty for sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by a teacher involving a student should almost invariably be” the stripping “of the member’s teaching certificate.” He goes on to state in his findings that “anything less brings disrepute on the college and the profession.”

We feel that we have amendments that would help strengthen the legislation and ensure that proper punitive measures are being taken at every stage of the process. We hope our amendments are given serious consideration, as I mentioned earlier, when it gets to the committee process.

Also of important note is Mr. LeSage’s recommendation 34, which states, “Decisions, including those that flow from dispute resolution agreements of the discipline committee, must be published and available on the website and the name of the member must be included.”

Transparency is paramount. It’s something that this government just can’t give lip service to. It is essential in ensuring that parents are able to make informed decisions about where they choose to enrol their children, which is

why we’re advocating that the government take this a step further and create a public website that lists individuals who have had their certificate revoked for certain forms of sexual abuse or acts relating to child pornography. Pornography is a huge issue that I am glad my colleague and my seatmate from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock is addressing very seriously in Bill 17.

Going back specifically to what we’re addressing today, we believe that the amendment would make it easier for parents to see which members of the college have committed an offence against a student. No longer would parents have to search the entire college database of suspension for various reasons. Rather, they would be able to see the list of individuals who have had their certificate revoked specifically for sexual misconduct charges.

0950

Thirdly, and by no means the least, is recommendation 24, which would require that timelines be set for drafting, reviewing, signing and serving notice of the hearing. In his rationale, LeSage emphasized: “If the discipline process does not quickly and appropriately deal with matters of professional misconduct and incompetence, the public interest is not being served.”

Speaker, that comment could apply to many other issues that this government is mismanaging, but I’d be remiss if I went in that direction, so I’m going to stick with the fact that in terms of recommendation 24 from LeSage, he went on to say, “School boards have expressed concerns about outstanding complaints. When decisions remain pending for a lengthy period, significant costs are incurred. The teacher is placed on administrative leave. The school board must pay a supply teacher. The delay in the communication of decisions can be a distractor in the work of schools and school boards. Additionally, teachers who are under investigation, and who choose to move to another school district, create difficult situations for school boards during the reference checking process. While recognizing the complexity of the process, timely information is critical. Like the school board, the member who is the subject of the discipline proceeding deserves an early conclusion to outstanding allegations.”

Speaker, with these changes, we believe that we are on a positive track to protecting students and ensuring that our classrooms remain a safe environment where they can learn and grow, free from fear.

All that said, we believe there are still some areas which could be strengthened. One in particular that we’ll be bringing forward in committee is to see those who are employed by a school board, by way of a letter of inclusion, face the same standards, penalties and processes as members of the college. School boards often employ people such as sports coaches and second-language instructors who do not possess a teaching certificate but who possess a letter of permission. We feel that they too should not be exempt. They too should fall under the same standards and repercussions as their

teacher counterparts, because they too are in a position of trust and influence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A very important bill. The title, Protecting Students—of course, everyone here, and I think everyone in society at large wants to make sure, when we send our kids to school, that they're in a safe environment.

That kind of leads me to talk about my granddaughter. She's four years old. This year was her first year that she started school. She is extremely excited, and she has a wonderful teacher. The experiences that she comes home and articulates really warm my heart.

There are so many great teachers out there, and students always look up to their teachers. They're their mentors. They spend more time, probably, with the teachers during the day sometimes than with parents at home—you know, like before they get ready for bed for the next day. We really value the work that teachers do.

We also understand the reason that the bill has been presented, because sometimes we do have to address situations where we need to protect our students. We have concerns with regard to some of the bill items. One of them is making sure that there is due process when that happens. We want to make sure that the process that's set up is a fair and just process when the situation arises.

Overall, I think we need to acknowledge that the majority of our teachers are wonderful educators, wonderful mentors and examples of fine adults for what our children need to see as responsible human beings.

I'm glad to debate the bill, because we have to make sure that we do protect our students in situations that arise such as this. They are few and far between, but there needs to be a system in place such that, when it does happen, we do have protection for our students.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: This morning, I'm also very pleased to rise and add my voice in support of Bill 37. As many of the speakers have spoken to, I think teachers have played a central role in all our lives. Now that my daughter has gone to first-year university, I can reflect back to her own school years and all of the stories she would bring home about the various teachers.

Going back to my own childhood, which now seems very, very long ago, there are teachers who have left their mark on us. I certainly have a few teachers to whom I owe a lot of who I am today.

But keeping that in context, from time to time, I guess circumstances are such that some teachers may need to be disciplined. That is what this bill is about. I believe it strikes a fair balance between recognizing, as all of us do, that for the most part teachers play a very constructive and positive role, but also recognizing that teachers also have great responsibility as they shape the lives of hundreds and thousands of children, and to that end, to make sure that we have in place all of the tools so that children and their safety are at all times protected.

One of the things that I truly like about this bill is the fact that it very clearly says to require the publication of all decisions of the discipline committee on the OCT website. To me, that speaks to the issue of transparency, because once the decisions are put online and it's public, I don't think there can be any questions lingering around the fairness of the process; or if there were, they could be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in support of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and add my voice in support of Bill 37.

I'd like to commend our speaker this morning, the member from Huron-Bruce, who went through and outlined a number of the reasons why we support the bill, conditionally, as we do, a little bit of the background and history of the bill, about it having been introduced twice before, and of course going back to the original under the PC government, when the legislation was first introduced a number of years ago.

As a number of speakers have said, a number of us look back—some of us further back than others—to our formative years in education. I won't go into any detail here about how far back that is for me, but, believe me, it was a number of years ago. I still remember those civics classes and those days, and there are certain teachers over the years, whether it was in grade school or in secondary school, who made an impression on me. Whether it was on history or civics or those types of courses that we took, it made a big impression on us.

They also outlined the 49 recommendations that were made as part of the LeSage report. Certainly, the college of teachers itself asked for the review. They recognized themselves that there was an issue either in the public's eye or in their own administration, but they had issues with—in any occupation, there's a certain number of people who need discipline, bad actors, whatever word you want to use. They recognized that themselves when they called for that review.

We certainly support the bill as it's written. I know that there was one thing we didn't get on the record, but they say here that British Columbia has provisions under section 50 of the Teachers Act “to suspend the letter of permission of a person who is the subject of the report, complaint or investigation until the report, complaint or investigation is resolved.” So there are a number of initiatives being taken across the country to address this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I think it's absolutely important that we protect our students. It's something that we all support in this House. There are circumstances that arise where we need to have certain protocols in place so that students are protected.

I think we've all shared stories about how teachers have had a tremendous impact on our lives. I recently was able to meet up with my grade 5 teacher after many

years. He lives in the same neighbourhood in Windsor where I grew up. I went by his house on a whim. I was with my childhood friend, and we knocked on his door and he was there. We chatted, and it was amazing to connect with someone who was such an important part of my life.

While it's so important to protect our students and while this bill is obviously important, it's also important to note that as the speaker mentioned, this government has had a very difficult time—it has stumbled a lot with the education file—and I agree. They've caused chaos in schools.

Currently, we're seeing a massive problem that's looming and is continuing to grow. Schools are in great and dire need of repairs. The government has not moved forward in terms of protecting students in schools that are crumbling, schools that don't have the right resources in terms of their infrastructure. In addition, this government promised not to cut in terms of education, and we're seeing in the Peel region that classrooms are being closed. At a time where there are more and more portables, we're seeing in addition classrooms being closed down.

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This is not the right direction. We need to ensure that students have a healthy and safe place to learn. Education is paramount in our society. It's the tool that provides society with the ability to grow and to learn, and particularly in the modern day where we have such an importance placed on the knowledge economy, we need a government that understands how important it is to invest, ensuring that our students are protected not only in terms of their treatment with their fellow classmates and by teachers but also in terms of the infrastructure of school.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Huron–Bruce for final comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I certainly appreciate the comments that we had from the member from London–Fanshawe, the minister responsible for seniors, the member from Sarnia–Lambton as well as the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, because we all concur. You heard it here, Speaker. We care about our students, we care about ensuring that they have safe learning environments that fit so well in communities and, in particular, the last comments that we just heard in terms of further examples of how this particular government over the last 13 years has failed with the education file, from the crumbling schools to the cuts to education that they said wouldn't be made; a failed accommodation review whereby this government purposely ripped out community impacts of school closures. The list could go on and on in terms of how this particular government of the day has failed students and failed communities in terms of their lack of vision and lack of commitment to community with regard to education. But the one thing that we need to embrace today is we all agree that Bill 37, once and for all, needs to get done.

As I mentioned earlier in my comments, at the PC Party of Ontario, we're leaders in this particular issue.

Going back to 2002, the minister of the day, Janet Ecker, actually introduced the legislation, and I'm so glad to see it's finally coming through after this government failed three different times. Actually, it failed two different times to bring it forward, this being the third time—their third kick at the can.

To conclude, I just want to share some comments from an author by the name of Haim Ginott. It ties together exactly what Bill 37 is trying to do. He quotes a teacher: "I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal."

Let's help our teachers be the best they can be and protect our students so that we have great learning environments throughout Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to rise today and speak on Bill 37, the Protecting Students Act. I'm glad to be able to follow our critic from Windsor West, the education critic, who has been doing fantastic work across the education sector with educators, education workers and those who really see first-hand what is going on in our schools and in our education system.

We are here talking about education. We're here talking about our students. We're talking about the climate in which they learn, the environment that they learn and grow in, and we want to ensure that that is always the strongest, best and safest environment it can be. Teachers and education workers do a phenomenal job every day. It has been very heartening to hear during the debate that members from all parties recognize the important work that they do every day; that teachers are social workers, they are mentors and they are role models. They are, of course, educators. They inspire. They guide. I think everyone in this room remembers their teachers: the good, the bad, the strict, the fair, the fun, the eccentric. We all remember our teachers. Sometimes we had a year that we really enjoyed our teachers, and other years where we did a lot of personal growing. But that's how we become who we are in our education system along the way, and we value the work of those who have shaped our understanding, our thoughts and our learning environments. All of those teachers, though, while they're all so different, what they all have in common is that they're in positions of influence, authority and trust.

I'll tell you, though, that teachers, just as much as parents, want to keep their kids safe, so they bend over backwards to ensure that that happens. They will spend the money that the government won't when it comes to art supplies, when it comes to sports equipment, when it comes to new shoes or food or whatever it is that they need to pay for to protect students' futures and their potential. They advocate. They have a duty to report. They work with parents. They work with special education supports in schools. It really does take a team in our schools to ensure that students have the best opportunities.

But this bill is about exceptions. It is a strong piece of legislation that we support and recognize as being neces-

sary. This bill talks about what happens when a teacher in a position of trust hurts, harms or abuses any of our children. There is never a place where our children should be at risk, and today we are discussing our schools and our classrooms. Certainly, there should never be harm in our schools and classrooms.

This bill makes changes—it amends the Ontario College of Teachers Act and makes changes that will affect a very small number of teachers—but it really is so important. This is necessary legislation, and we absolutely support it. We want it to be tough. We want to protect our kids. We want to ensure due process, as we've heard over and over again. We must have proper oversight and measures in place to ensure crimes are punished and kids are always protected.

A bit of history, Mr. Speaker: In 2000, there were changes to the Child and Family Services Act that required teachers to report all suspicions that they had if a child was in need of protection. As a teacher, I knew that I had a duty to report. We all did. We also had a duty to care and to protect.

Parents hand over what is most precious in the world to them to the care of those in our schools. We take that job seriously as educators. There's trust and integrity that is involved, and so it makes me sick to my stomach to imagine any who would harm our most precious, our students.

Back in 2011, the Toronto Star brought to light failings in the Ontario College of Teachers. The Ontario College of Teachers actually did admit that there were failings in terms of transparency and maintaining that public trust, and that there were teachers who were granted anonymity, who pled guilty or no contest to certain allegations. There were a number of changes that needed to happen at that time, and the Ontario College of Teachers did take action. It hired retired Judge LeSage, who investigated and put forward a 76-page report with 49 recommendations.

At that time, the education minister said, "We are not waiting to take action." Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are; and this is the third time that an incarnation of this bill has been brought forward. While I'm glad to debate this now—this hasn't happened yet, and it's about time that it did.

The LeSage report said the public interest "must underlie each and every decision made by councillors of the college" and "the overriding principle must be transparency and openness." It absolutely must.

Speaker, there is nothing more important than the safety and the psychological well-being of our children. We know that teachers are always on duty. They're professionals in positions of trust, and they must uphold high standards of conduct. When they fail to, they absolutely must be held accountable.

The Ontario College of Teachers has a role and that is to maintain public trust in our education system, to investigate, to discipline and to conduct public hearings while maintaining a fair due process and operating within their mandate.

The government has a role and that is to act effectively and swiftly when it comes to the LeSage report recommendations. But as I said, here we are four or five years later. This should be a matter of principle. We're talking about safety and security, egregious misconduct and sexual abuse. So three bills and almost five years later, that sounds like a matter of politics, and that is unfortunate.

1010

I don't know what the government wants, but I know that parents want kids to be safe and students want to learn and grow in safe classrooms. New Democrats want that too. I would imagine all members of this House want that. We want tough legislation to ensure that guilty individuals are appropriately and fairly disciplined and kept away from our kids. We also need to ensure due process for the accused. We want stricter but fairer penalties.

Teachers are accused of any number of things on a regular basis in today's schools. That is the truth. Unfounded, frivolous, vexatious and malicious accusations are not uncommon, unfortunately. I taught for almost 10 years, and there was never a year, there was never a school, where I didn't bear witness to career-damaging false accusations directed at great teachers. That is, unfortunately, the nature of the business. Everyone deserves due process; however, if found guilty, then no one deserves to be let off the hook when it comes to our kids.

This bill, Bill 37, is called the Protecting Students Act. I would say that there are a few items missing. My colleague the critic for education has brought forward a number of issues when it comes to infrastructure, the school repair backlog and the unbelievable heating and cooling issues—the situations within our schools. We've talked about what chronic underfunding has led to. Really, it's jeopardizing the learning environment. It's jeopardizing learning.

I mentioned that teachers will reach into their own pockets and into their own hearts when it comes to school supplies, when it comes to food, when it comes to providing not the extras but the fundamentals—that they are filling in the budgetary gaps for this government. But it has reached a tipping point because, when we realize that so much is missing, our students are not being protected; their best interests are not being protected.

So I worry that this bill is a little bit of a misnomer—well, not a misnomer, but we're missing something here; we're missing an opportunity. Much like the Putting Students First Act was a great title—it was a great title, but it didn't put students first; it robbed teachers of sick leave and, among other things, stole the right to freely bargain contracts, you may recall. It imposed a contract instead.

Now, by the way, after a charter challenge, the courts have found that Bill 115 was unconstitutional. Now, this government has a chance to make things right, a chance to remedy this illegal wrong. This government has done so much damage to our education system; I wonder

where they're going to begin. With language like "putting students first" and "protecting students," you would almost be optimistic; you would almost think they were sincere in wanting to make education better.

However, since losing the charter challenge, this government's offer is to apologize and stick teachers and students with the status quo. The status quo isn't serving our students. Since it was against the law to forcibly take away the right to negotiate, this government's remedy suggestion is to politely offer to take away the right to negotiate. Speaker, actually, wouldn't that still be illegal? Just a question. I find this government unbelievable, and we will watch this play out. Instead of strengthening education or protecting learning or students, they seek to undermine and damage just to save a buck wherever they can.

I would say that we're also missing an opportunity to protect students. I'm hearing, in my community and across the province, a distressing issue: One of the priority issues right now is violence in our schools. Bill 37 chooses to omit it. As a teacher and as the critic for community safety, I am concerned. We see escalating violence and a lack of funding for special education. We're not doing what we need to protect our students in our classrooms. We have Kevlar in our classrooms. We have evacuations in our classrooms. We have teachers who are mandated to wear Kevlar hoodies and shin guards. This is real, in our elementary classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, you're telling me to wrap up. I've got so much more to say. Okay, fine. I will finish with, "Shame on this government." I think that students need protection from this government. That's how things have turned out. Isn't that a shame?

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 10:15 and this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Our new page from Parkdale—High Park, John Papanikolaou—his mother, Elena Poulos, is here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the member for Scarborough Southwest and his page captain, Cooper Custance, I'm pleased to recognize Cooper's parents, Donna and Todd Custance; his grandparents Fran and Don Brownrigg; and his sister Kate Custance. They will be in the members' gallery this morning. Please welcome them.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, as you know, a page from my riding, Elisabeth Lawton—her mother, Barbara Higgins, is here. Welcome to Queen's Park this morning.

As well, from the Co-operative Housing Federation—I met this morning with my friends Douglas Wong, Denise McGahan and David Waters. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm really excited to welcome a good friend of mine to Queen's Park. Her name is Céline Carrière. She is the executive director of the Co-operative

Housing Association of Eastern Ontario. I want to thank Céline for her incredible work in our community.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm very pleased to introduce Josi MacCarthy, who is the proud mother of Paige MacCarthy, who is the page from the riding of Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Today I'd like to welcome guests from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada: Harvey Cooper, managing director; David Waters, president; Barb Millsap, treasurer; and Dawn Richardson, program manager. Welcome. I look forward to the reception tonight.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce Simone Swail, Tim Ross and Peter Gesiarz. They're here today as part of Co-Op Housing Day. I encourage everyone here to attend their event this evening in rooms 228 and 230, to learn more about the good work that they are doing. Thanks again for being here, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome some students from Queen's University who are here for the legislative press gallery's mentoring program. I would also like to acknowledge Christina Blizzard for her wonderful work in doing that mentoring, as well as the other members of the press. Please, everyone, join me in a round of applause.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have some visitors from up north. We have the chief of Mattagami First Nation, Mr. Walter Naveau, and the fire chief of Gogama, in the north end of my community, who have made the trek down to take in question period this morning. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome Eva Pinto, who is the mother of page Aaron Pinto. Both live in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville. Please welcome them.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Earlier today I met with Elder Garry Sault from the Mississaugas of the New Credit, and also David Suzuki from the David Suzuki Foundation, who are on the grounds today talking about the Environmental Bill of Rights.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today, in the public gallery, James Edwards, the father of our page Carter Edwards. Welcome, James. We're really thrilled to have Carter as a page from our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member from—let me get it right. The member from—

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Scarborough—Rouge River.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —Scarborough—Rouge River.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: There was just a by-election, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shows you that I don't pay attention to that.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm exceedingly happy to welcome the students from Albert Campbell Collegiate Institute in my riding, Scarborough—Rouge River.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to introduce the House to our new pages. Could I have them assemble, please.

Is Aaron here? There he is. He was already working.

From Mississauga East—Cooksville, Aaron Pinto; from Davenport, Bianca Morelli; from Toronto Centre, Carter Edwards; from Oshawa, Catherine Pelicano; from Scarborough Southwest, Cooper Custance; from Willowdale, Do En Kim; from Nepean—Carleton, Dylan Manary; from Windsor—Tecumseh, Elisabeth Lawton; from Perth—Wellington, Emily Royce; from Parkdale—High Park, John Papanikolaou; from Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Kepler Pyle; from Vaughan, Nicolas Polga; from Ottawa—Vanier, Olivier Bélanger; from Simcoe—Grey, Paige MacCarthy; from Brampton—Springdale, Paige Schneider; from Halton, Riya Karumanchi; from Don Valley West, Samantha Lew; from Etobicoke North, Suryakant Jain; from Brampton West, Yasmine Ahmed; and from Pickering—Scarborough East, Randy Ai.

These are our pages for this session.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): After those introductions, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Energy. We know the Liberal Party took \$1.3 million in donations from renewable energy companies, we know the Liberal government gave those 30 companies energy contracts for power that Ontario did not need and we know the Liberal government will overpay \$9.2 billion for renewable energy contracts already signed.

Rather than cast blame on others, rather than try games of diversion, I want a simple question answered. My question is: Can the Minister of Energy explain and reconcile whether this government took \$1.3 million in donations for the Ontario Liberal Party in exchange for contracts that were overpaid—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, no, no, no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. That will do.

Hon. Bill Mauro: How do you feel about that?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do. Minister of Municipal Affairs, I just said stop and you continued. Stop.

That is not an acceptable section of your question. It will be withdrawn.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdraw.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I thank the member for the somewhat of a question. When it comes to election financing, our goal with elections financing reform has been to change the way that politics are done in Ontario. We believe that the public interest must be paramount, and that's why our caucus and our government have taken the step to look at making sure that we continue to hear from the general public over the summer.

When it comes to fundraising, I find it very interesting that the Leader of the Opposition held a steak dinner for \$5,000 per person and, of course, then a golf tournament at \$2,000 per person. That's \$7,000 for a little bit of golf and steak. I won't take any lessons from people who like to throw stones in glass houses.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

There are two points I'm going to make right now very quickly. Number one, I'm not going to allow the drop to the bottom on this circumstance. I'm going to ask everyone to choose their questions and answers delicately. If I continue to hear the kinds of accusations that are taking place, I'm going to pass questions and pass answers.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Energy: It was the Auditor General who said that Ontario, because of this government, has overpaid \$9.2 billion. That's the independent legislative oversight, saying this government has overpaid by \$9.2 billion. The question is, why did we overpay so much? Why has Ontario made such an error in judgment? Why did this government take us down this path? Why are we selling power at a loss?

The Minister of Energy's talking point is that there is net revenue of \$230 million, but that's not profit. The energy could have cost hundreds of millions or billions of dollars. We are losing. We are subsidizing Pennsylvania, Michigan and New York and I can't get a straight answer from this government. All I get is attacks. All I get is diversion.

I want the government to answer. Reconcile the fact of why they're subsidizing other states. Why are they supporting our competition?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very happy to answer the member's question once again. The heavy lifting was done by this government to get rid of coal. We're not the PC party, the pro-coal party. We are very, very happy to ensure that we don't have to send out warnings anymore to let people know that they can't go outside to breathe. When it comes to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. This is a notice to both sides. If I must, I will move to warnings. Tone it down.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The opposition left our electricity system in disrepair, and we had to do the heavy lifting to fix it.

But when we're talking about our neighbours to the south and our neighbours around us, the Leader of the Opposition has his facts incorrect. Ontario's 2015 average industrial electricity prices were \$8.35 in the south, \$6.35 in the north. We're lower than New York, which is \$8.72. We're lower than Pennsylvania, which is \$9.59. Michigan is \$9.13. I look forward to more of this in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Energy, and I appreciate the Minister of Energy's artistic spin and talking points, but the reality is that the Ontario Liberal Party took \$1.3 million in donations. According to some estimates, since 2009 we have given away—hear this—\$6 billion.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The chief government whip will come to order.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I understand this is a touchy topic for this government. They're embarrassed of their own record. They have given away, since 2009, \$6 billion. They should heckle. They should be upset about this because it's embarrassing for Ontario. They have turned our energy policy into the laughingstock of North America.

I stress: Can I please get an answer? Why are we subsidizing companies in Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania? Why are we creating and giving away surplus energy? Can I get an answer rather than attacks and diversions? Please answer the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Next one.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased, once again, to rise and answer the Leader of the Opposition's question. The only party that should be embarrassed is that party for the system that they left for us to take over. We had to ensure that we built a system that's reliable, that's safe and that's clean, and we've just done that.

When it comes to residential prices in the largest cities in North America, Toronto has a \$161 average monthly bill. That's lower than New York, Detroit and Boston: \$289 in New York City, \$177 in Detroit and \$300 in Boston.

What's important about the US states that the Leader of the Opposition loves referring to is that they all still rely on coal. We don't, Mr. Speaker. We eliminated it.

HYDRO REBATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Despite the Liberals trying to undermine the Auditor General, we finally got to see the government's books, and there were some very interesting items in the public accounts.

For example, the Ontario Energy Board spent nearly \$12 million on the Ontario Electricity Support Program, the OESP rebate for low-income households. And of that \$12 million spent on the OESP, \$9 million went to consultants. That's \$9 million that went to high-priced consultants instead of families who needed it most.

Why did it take \$9 million worth of consultants to hand out a rebate? Please answer the question, for once.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and answer this question because we're very proud of the OESP program. It's a brand new program, and it's designed to offer support to those who need it most.

In order to receive this benefit—\$45 for families; up to \$75 for seniors, for those who heat their homes with heat and, of course, for those who have to plug in with medical devices—they need to apply for the program. Here's what the opposition doesn't get, Mr. Speaker: They need to know about it.

So what we've done is we have ensured that the OEB is working on a program to ensure that this ad campaign lets as many people as possible in this province know about the program. In 10 months, 145,000 families have now signed up for this program. That's one third of all people who are eligible.

We're going to continue to work hard to make sure that every family knows about this program, rather than this party just shaking their fist at it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When I'm seeking to have everyone heard on both sides, each side is having their own people interrupt the question that's being put or the answer that's being put. I'm going to start moving towards everybody who's even deciding that they want to interject. Put your name on the docket for a question.

Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Energy: I didn't realize that it was a subsidy program for Liberal consultants and ad people. This was meant for low-income families. That's what this is about. This is money meant for low-income families, not high-priced Liberal consultants.

Not only did the Liberals spend \$9 million on consultants—hear this, Mr. Speaker—they spent another \$2.5 million on ads. The government can't pass up an opportunity to pat themselves on the back using taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Speaker, wouldn't that \$2.5 million and wouldn't that \$9 million be better used on low-income families? For once, do the right thing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. The Minister of Children and Youth Services will come to order. The Minister of Education will come to order. The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will come to order and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services will come to order. I've got a good memory. And if it continues, I'll move to warnings.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very happy, again, to rise and answer that question, because we are doing the right

thing. We are bringing forward a program that's actually helping 145,000 families right across the province, and that's why this government is doing everything it can to inform Ontario families of this program that they are eligible for, Mr. Speaker.

1050

Here are some of those initiatives that we've pursued so far: advertisements in print, on radio and in bus shelters; slips in the ODSP and the Ontario Works cheques; bill inserts from local utilities; partnerships with food banks, libraries and MPP offices; requiring that all utilities include a link on their website.

We're doing everything we can to make sure families know about this program because we know it's important that they receive this support. These efforts are reflected in the results. In just 10 months, we have a third of the eligible customers already online. That's 145,000 families receiving this benefit. I hope we see more and I hope this actually gets more families signing up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Minister of Energy: No matter the justifications, no matter the spin, I don't buy for a second that it was appropriate to spend \$9 million on Liberal consultants instead of low-income families that can't pay their hydro bills. I don't buy for a second that this government should have spent \$2.5 million on ads instead of low-income families.

They just don't get it. They are that out of touch. They think everything's rosy in Ontario, that people can handle their hydro bills. People are in energy poverty, and I'm tired of the government being oblivious to it.

Now here's a fact, Mr. Speaker: Only 137,000 applicants out of the 500,000 that are in need got approved—137,000. You're leaving hundreds of thousands of Ontario families in need because this government decided to take care of Liberal consultants and ad men instead of the people of Ontario. How does this government justify that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems the only way that the Leader of the Opposition knew about this program was by the ads that we put out. The Leader of the Opposition continues to offer no clear plan on the energy sector. We have a plan. We're making sure that we're helping those in need.

The Leader of the Opposition criticizes the government over legal challenges but wants to tear up renewable energy contracts and expose Ontario to billions of dollars in liability. He was against the carbon tax when he ran for the leadership; now he's in favour of a carbon tax. Now he says he's concerned about the costs for families but doesn't want to spend money informing families about what programs are available.

On this side of the House we have a plan and we're acting on it. My priority as the Minister of Energy is to ensure that Ontarians have affordable access to clean, reliable electricity, and that's what we're going to continue to do, unlike the pro-coal party.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound will come to order, the member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order and the member from Nipissing will come to order. I have a memory.

New question.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. When did the Liberals and Ed Clark first start discussing the privatization of eHealth assets?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Good morning, Speaker. I want to be very, very clear. The Premier has been very, very clear, Ed Clark has been very clear, and I want to be clear: eHealth is not for sale. Personal health information is not for sale.

Now, I know that kind of spoils their party because they want to make a party out of this, but I tell you, we take our responsibility—

Mr. Paul Miller: Put some mustard on that baloney.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We take our responsibility for the health of the people of Ontario very seriously. We think we can do better using the digital tools that are available to us through eHealth and beyond.

The arrangement with eHealth comes to an end at the end of 2017. Now is the perfect time to take stock, to understand the value we have and understand how we can improve the value of eHealth in this province. It is saving \$1 billion a year now. We think we can do even better with a more robust—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We know you can do better as well, and we've also heard this all before. On November 5, 2015, the Deputy Premier said, "We are looking at other assets." Since then, nothing major has been put on the auction block—until last week, when the Minister of Health asked Ed Clark to start looking at Ontario's eHealth assets. Has the government been planning to privatize our eHealth assets for the last 11 months?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I'm not sure how much clearer I can be, but let me try: eHealth is not for sale, will not be for sale. Personal health information is not for sale, will not be for sale. No matter how much angst the NDP wants to stir up, I can assure them that they are going down a path that is simply their path and their path alone: eHealth is not for sale; personal health information is not for sale.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Last November, the Deputy Premier said, "We are looking at other assets." That same month, Ed Clark spoke to the Toronto board of trade and he said this about digital medicine in the province of Ontario: "I say: open them up, link them more closely to the private sector, turn them into exporters." It does beg the question: Has Ed Clark been working on the sell-off of eHealth assets since last November?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Ed Clark has not been working on the sale of eHealth ever before, ever now or ever in the future. eHealth is not for sale. Personal health information is not for sale.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again, back to the Acting Premier. The Premier claims that she wants to improve digital health care options, but the Minister of Health didn't write to Ed Clark asking for ways to improve digital health assets. That did not happen. Instead, he asked Ed Clark to figure out how much money the government could get for selling them off.

Can the government explain why they need to know how much money they'll get for selling off eHealth in order to improve it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would suggest that the member opposite actually review that letter, because it's very clear: eHealth is not for sale; eHealth will not be for sale. No matter how many times the question is asked, the answer is the same: eHealth is not for sale. Personal health information is not for sale.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, that letter contains the same language that they used when they wrote about Hydro One, and that wasn't for sale either.

If you want to improve education, you don't need to ask how much money you can get for selling all the schools off. But the Premier seems to suggest that in order for Ed Clark to improve our digital health assets, he needs to figure out how much they're worth on the open market. It doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker. Even with Liberal math, it doesn't add up.

What is the government actually interested in? And why do they need to know how much cash they can get from our eHealth assets?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said earlier, the mandate of eHealth does come to an end at the end of 2017, so the prudent thing to do is for government to look at the asset that has been created through eHealth, because we want to do even better with the opportunities of the digital age when it comes to health. That is the right thing to be doing.

We are already saving \$1 billion a year thanks to the progress made on eHealth. We think we can do even better. It's better value for money, and more importantly, it's better health care for patients. It's fewer unnecessary tests. It's fewer trips to the doctor. We think we can do better, and we want to maximize the potential of digital health and eHealth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Minister of Health wrote to Ed Clark asking him to figure out "the value of our existing digital health assets." He was asking how much they would be worth if the Premier sold them.

Now the Premier says this is all about "the best digital health strategy possible." The problem is, that isn't what the Liberals were saying last week. If the government is truly concerned about improving digital health strategies, why are they so interested in how much money the Premier can get for our eHealth assets? The people of this province want to know.

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'll tell you what: The people of this province want to know that eHealth is not and will not be for sale, that personal health information is not and will not be for sale. What they want is a third party that actually holds us to account but doesn't continue to stir the pot on something that clearly is not our intention and has never been our intention.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Wait times for knee and hip replacement surgery are on the rise in southwestern Ontario. The real wait time in London is longer than what is posted by this government. Wait-lists are growing longer very quickly, and Londoners are now told that their surgery wait time will be at least 11 months, 15 months in Strathroy—and that is after waiting months or years to see their surgeon.

Last winter, I raised in this Legislature the issue of over 500 cancelled surgeries for knees and hips in London, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Strathroy from January to April due to a lack of funds. Patients' quality of life has deteriorated, causing undue hardship and an increase in health expenditures. Now wait times are expanding due to this government's rationing of care.

Speaker, will the government act now and properly fund knee and hip surgeries in southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite that wait times are something that we put a very high priority on. In fact, when we took office, we didn't measure wait times; nobody measured wait times. Now we know what wait times are, and we are focused on getting those wait times down further.

We have made significant investments, but we are the first to admit that the job is not done. There is more to do when it comes to reducing wait times, and that's exactly the focus of our wait times strategy.

We have funded an additional 77,000 hip and knee replacements. Since 2003, our government has invested almost \$2 billion for more than three million additional procedures to reduce wait times. Is there more to do? Absolutely.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It was shown last week in the media that wait times are no better today than they were when

they started their strategy in 2005. They're failing the people of London and southwestern Ontario with their strategy.

On top of this, Ontarians deserve some transparency to the system. The wait times posted by the government do not include the amount of time it takes to see the surgeon. The government keeps that information secret. It distorts the reality of how rationed our health care system has become.

Patients in southwestern Ontario deserve better. Many are waiting months and years just to see their surgeons on top of the additional wait time to get the surgery. Will the minister and this government be open and transparent and release the true wait times they're hiding from the public?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Come clean. We're waiting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am, because every time everyone says something, I'm going to get you. The member from Renfrew, come to order—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —and the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I'd like to correct the member opposite's assertion that wait times are not better in the South West LHIN. They are. Hip replacements are down 15% for the 90th percentile and knee replacements are down by 32%. So there is progress being made.

Is it enough? The answer: We acknowledge that we still have a challenge. When it comes to what is known as wait time 1, that is, from the time of referral to the time of consultation, that is part of the plan to measure the entire wait time.

We started with wait time 2, from consult to procedure. Focusing on wait time 1 is the next step in improving transparency when it comes to wait times.

DISASTER RELIEF

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Two weeks ago, I shared with this House that the good people of Gogama and Mattagami First Nation had reached a tipping point with the lack of action to clean up the Makami River following the CN derailment. On Thanksgiving, the entire village of Gogama and First Nations of Mattagami, young and old, all came out and blocked the road peacefully, when they should normally have been enjoying Thanksgiving with their families.

Chief Naveau of Mattagami First Nation as well as Gogama fire chief Mike Benson are here today. They made the long trip from up north to Queen's Park to hear you answer this simple question: Will the minister order the cleanup of the Makami River?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The short answer is yes. The process to get there is, I have to follow the laws of Ontario.

I want to welcome the chiefs and thank them and their colleagues for coming down today.

We have a process to go through. There are studies and assessments that are required by CN, which are reviewed and enforced by the ministry. We have to ensure that the proper testing is done, because much of this oil that may be residual will be in sediment, and the removal of it has to be done prudently so it doesn't cause unintended negative impacts on fish and fish health.

It also has to involve fully the First Nations and the citizens of Gogama, and we'll work through the proper process with Sudbury public health and the members of the community supporting.

I just want to conclude by saying I think our relationship is collaborative on this. I appreciate your leadership, and I thank you for raising the issue again today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Time is of the essence. Winter is coming in the north. There's going to be five feet of ice on the Makami River, and then the next thaw will bring the oil further down, maybe into beautiful Minisinakwa Lake. I don't want this to happen.

For anyone who takes the time to come to Gogama, to come to the Makami River, all you have to do is look and you will see dead fish. All you have to do is throw a rock or stir the bottom, and you will see oil coming up to the top.

I'm not the only one. Thousands of people have signed petitions, from 81 different communities. The North-eastern Ontario Municipal Association, the town of Timmins, the Algoma District Municipal Association and many more are passing motions to urge the minister to act now, before the winter comes and more oil gets down into the river, further into the lake.

We are looking at another Grassy Narrows, and I don't want this. Will the minister order CN today to start cleaning the river?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member opposite, again, thank you for raising the issue. CN has already cleaned up a great deal of the oil in the river and has spent a great deal of money doing so. The first major cleanup, on two separate occasions—because the great tragedy of this is that this is not one Gogama incident; it has been two. One is too many, and two is a ridiculously great number. We now are working with the federal government on rail safety issues as well, because one of the most important things is to prevent this from happening again.

The next phase of that was to go back and do very direct studies to figure out where in the river system this oil exists. Now we're trying to figure out how that can be best extracted.

I will hold CN to account. I will be meeting with them in a couple of weeks. I said I would report on the progress of that. I will continue working hand in glove with you to ensure we get this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Northumberland–Quinte West.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm glad we agree, Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Tourism is an important economic driver. In 2013, numbers indicate that tourism supported over 362,000 jobs and generated over \$28.5 billion of economic activity in Ontario.

In June 2016, the minister released Ontario's Tourism Action Plan, aligning the specific action items the government will undertake immediately to enable a positive environment for industry growth. Ontario's festival events in particular attract tourism, create jobs and support economic growth.

The Ontario government recently launched Celebrate Ontario 2017. Last year, Celebrate Ontario supported an increased performance schedule, which included a 28% increase in tourism.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you tell the members of this House about how Celebrate Ontario supports tourism?

1110

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I want to thank the hard-working member from Northumberland–Quinte West for his excellent question and his advocacy for events and attractions in his riding.

Ontario's festivals and events attract tourists, create jobs and support economic growth. Every year, they support tens of thousands of jobs in Ontario and generate millions of dollars in revenue. That's why our government continues to make strategic investments in festivals and events. Since 2007, Celebrate Ontario has invested \$153 million in more than 1,900 festivals and events across Ontario.

This year, our government is supporting over 200 festivals and events through Celebrate Ontario 2016. According to past recipients, every \$1 of funding results in \$18 of visitor spending. That's spending in communities right across our province. That's money going directly into the local economy, creating jobs and supporting economic growth and contributing to the quality of life of Ontarians and visitors alike.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary from the member from—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Northumberland–Quinte West. Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the minister.

It is fantastic to hear how wide-reaching and how successful our government's Celebrate Ontario fund is. A

number of successful festivals were held in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West, including Westben Arts Festival Theatre in Trent Hills and Float your Fanny Down the Ganny in Port Hope. It's great to see that rural and northern Ontario festivals and events have been added as target sectors, given their importance to these communities.

Members of this House know that funding from Celebrate Ontario helps festival and event organizers offer new experiences, reach new audiences and generate more economic activity in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you tell the members of this House about what's new with Celebrate Ontario in 2017?

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you again to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Speaker, I'd like to begin by thanking the hundreds of organizations and thousands of volunteers who organize the festivals and events that attract tourists, support tens of thousands of jobs and generate millions of dollars in revenue for communities across our province.

As part of the commitment made in Ontario's Tourism Action Plan, we have reviewed the Celebrate Ontario program and, based on input, we've made improvements to further streamline the application process: things like reintroducing multi-year funding, integrating marketing supports as an eligible expense and applying a rural and northern lens to events that play a vital role in smaller communities.

This year, applicants are encouraged to apply for funding for events in 2017 that promote Canada and Ontario's 150th anniversary. I want to let members of the House know in particular that this year's applicants have until November 8 to apply for both the Celebrate Ontario 2017 category and the Celebrate Ontario 2017 multi-year category.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Finance. By cancelling the Slots at Racetracks Program, the government left the horse racing industry a shadow of its former self. Racetracks, horsemen and local economies are still struggling. The death of 13,000 horses and the loss of thousands of jobs rest on the shoulders of this government. Instead of apologizing, the government plowed ahead with its misguided modernization program. It's going to put even more of the industry out of business.

Ontario Racing has a plan that could bring some stability. We still need to remember that proposed funding will not come close to the previous revenue-sharing agreement; uncertainty will persist. Speaker, will the minister ease that uncertainty and commit today to keeping the doors open at all 15 of our racetracks?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. I think we all appreciate that we want a very sustained horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. It's why we have made a commitment for long-term sustainability of the horse racing industry. We've taken steps to support a stable industry by providing the appropriate funding by extending the government's \$100-million annual funding program by two years. The OLG will establish a future long-term funding arrangement with the industry.

As I said, we've also passed legislation to integrate the operations of the Ontario Racing Commission with the OLG and the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, all of which promotes and allows the industry to benefit from a centralized marketing resource and its expertise to expose more Ontarians to the thrills of horse racing. We are taking every step necessary to provide a sustainable industry because we're partnering with that industry in an appropriate manner in conjunction with members of the industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's obvious the minister has not spoken to anybody in the horse racing business. If the minister is truly serious about the future of horse racing, why did he make it such an insignificant part of his modernization plan?

This government seems determined to create winners and losers, but mostly losers. Funding or no funding, the losers seem to be the smaller tracks and those who rely on them. If the government allows slots to leave tracks, racing areas like Ajax Downs will be in jeopardy. That could spell the end of quarter horse racing in Ontario.

Does the minister believe it's modern to wipe out a vital industry in rural areas?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's vital to provide the appropriate supports to maintain long-term sustainability of the horse racing industry, and that is why we are very much working in conjunction with the stakeholders from the horse racing industry to provide us with the recommendations necessary to move forward.

We all recognize that we want a much more broadened and more effective racing industry in the communities across Ontario. That's why we've taken the steps that we've taken. It's why we've made the commitment for long-term funding. It is why the horse racing industry is working with the province of Ontario and it is why we're taking their recommendations in the recommendations that we make and put forward at this time.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today, front-line mental health workers from OPSEU will be here to call for government action to keep people safe on the job. Workers in the mental health sector are put at risk every day. Hundreds of physical

assaults against staff are being reported every year, and that is not okay. Every front-line mental health worker needs to be able to go home safely to their families at the end of their shift.

Workers need to know: When will this Liberal government step up and take real steps to prevent violence against workers and patients in the mental health sector?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that excellent question. It's a very important question because we take incidents of workplace violence and workplace harassment very, very seriously. The nurses and the employees who work in our mental health facilities provide the highest quality of care for Ontarians. While they are providing that care, we're committed to ensuring that they work in safe conditions.

Now, to help with this goal very specifically, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and I announced a leadership table some time ago, the workplace violence in health care roundtable. It's comprised of key stakeholders, including those people who do such a wonderful job in the mental health facilities. It includes patient advocates. What they're doing is looking at the root causes of violence against health care workers, and where we began very, very specifically is with the nurses in those facilities.

The union, OPSEU, sits at that leadership table. I know they've expressed recently how successful this program has been and how they plan to remain committed to it. I look forward to adding more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again to the Acting Premier: Front-line mental health workers have reached a tipping point. They cannot carry on facing hundreds of assaults and incidents of workplace violence against staff day after day, every year. The people who work so incredibly hard to provide mental health care need to see real action from this government to protect them on the job. They deserve answers today.

Will the government's leadership table on workplace violence prevention consider each and every recommendation from front-line mental health workers, those who do the job, and provide a funding package to pay for the implementation of these health and safety initiatives?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you once again to the honourable member. OPSEU sits at the leadership table. They are right there. They are not afraid to express their opinions, believe me. I've been at some of the meetings and they've expressed recently how successful they think the process has been to date.

Both the Ministry of Health and my ministry, the Ministry of Labour, have been working with OPSEU to make these facilities as safe as possible. We remain committed to that goal. The process is going well.

Based on the advice at the table, whatever the recommendations are that the table comes up with, we're going to develop a plan to make hospitals safer, mental health facilities safer.

I have offered to visit Waypoint myself. I will be quite happy to go up there, speak with the folks. I'm awaiting the invitation to be accepted. Certainly we're committed to making sure that those people who do a wonderful job for us work in safe working conditions.

1120

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Attorney General. This week is Access to Justice Week in Ontario. Ontario's justice system is an important part of our democracy and plays a crucial role in people's lives every day.

In my riding of Davenport, many of my constituents are reliant on legal aid organizations like West Toronto Community Legal Services to access the justice system. They understand the importance of equal access to our justice system and justice services regardless of financial means, geography, ethnicity, sexuality or gender identity.

Can the Attorney General tell us about our government's efforts to help increase access to the justice system in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member from Davenport for asking a very important question. Access to justice is an important challenge and I recognize that we have a lot of work to do.

A key part of helping people access justice services like legal advice is enhancing affordability. That's why our government continues to invest in legal aid. Our 2014 budget included the largest infusion of new funding toward financial eligibility in Legal Aid Ontario's history: \$95.7 million of new funds.

This past April marked a third increase to the legal aid eligibility threshold, making it possible for an additional 400,000 people to access legal aid services. Once our strategy is fully implemented, an additional one million low-income Ontarians will be eligible for legal aid services. That's more than double the current number.

I look forward to sharing more information during the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to thank the Attorney General for his response. I am pleased to hear that our government is taking steps to ensure more people have access to important legal services by investing in legal aid—I believe it was 400,000 more people the Attorney General spoke of.

I'm also aware of the growing opportunity to use technology and digital innovation to increase access to justice. These modernization initiatives aim to enhance access to justice by making the justice system and services more user-friendly like other updated public services such as online driver's licence renewal.

Can the Attorney General elaborate on his ministry's efforts to increase access to justice using technology and digital innovation?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's very much my commitment that justice services be accessible and user-friendly. This

means examining current processes and procedures that are largely paper-based and are delivered in person. While we are only at the beginning, the Ministry of the Attorney General has taken some important first steps to modernize the justice system, like our court process.

Earlier this year, we launched an online service where parents can start or update straightforward child support payments electronically without having to go to the court. We've also increased remote video capacity in our bail courts and correctional institutions. In addition, we have introduced e-filing for all small claims, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I believe that there is so much more we can do to use technology and digital innovation to increase access to justice for everyone in Ontario and I look forward to working on that important issue.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: My question is to the Minister of Education. Last week, I attended a community meeting at St. Gabriel Lalemant Catholic School in my riding. The meeting was part of the Ministry of Education accommodation review process. I learned there that you are asking school boards to consolidate as many students as they can in larger schools and close as many small schools as possible. No consideration is given to the distances these kids have to travel to the new school. No consideration is given to the fact that a school with a larger number of students limits the potential for kids to participate in school sports. No consideration is given to the students with special needs.

Why would you put students and their families through this type of abuse?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for this question. I fully understand that when school boards have to make decisions about schools, it's a very difficult conversation that they have to have. It's a difficult conversation to have with communities and with parents, and there is concern. That's why we have a process to consult with communities, to consult with parents, and it seems as if the member opposite—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chief government whip, second time.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: —is participating in that particular process.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also a member from Scarborough so I know that there are difficult decisions that have to be made because we don't want to be funding empty class spaces. We want our funding to be invested in students and in their outcomes and in the learning supports that they need, so that's what we're focused on. When school boards have to make very tough choices around schools, they have a process in which to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Back to the minister: I heard from one mother at the consultation about her child with special needs. She is worried he will not get

the attention he needs at a larger, congested school away from home.

Do you realize that these are kids and they're not just some small objects? Why would you treat them like objects?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Ontario has one of the best education systems in the world and we are continuing to invest in our education system. Our graduation results have moved from 68% to 85.5%. We are very much investing in our schools and investing in our students, including our students with special education. We invest \$2.7 billion in special education needs for our students.

What's important here is that the school boards are conducting an appropriate process of inviting input from parents, from the community, so that they can make an informed decision about their schools. That's what is happening. I would encourage the member opposite to participate in that process and do what is in the best interests of our schools and the students. We have one of the best education systems and we're going to continue to fund and support it.

HYDRO REBATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. According to the public accounts, the government spent nearly \$12 million on consultants and advertising for the new Ontario Electricity Support Program. Two months ago, the Ontario Energy Board reported that only 25% of the estimated half million households that are eligible for the OESP had actually enrolled. So three out of four eligible low-income families endured a cold winter, paying the highest electricity rates in Canada, without receiving any help from the OESP.

After spending all the money on consultants and advertising, why was enrolment so low?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, I'm very pleased to rise and talk about the OESP program. It's a brand new program. It's only 10 months old and we have 145,000 families already enrolled in this program but we want more. Like the member from the third party, we do agree that we need to have more people on this program because it is there to help folks who are having a hard time meeting their electricity bills on a monthly basis.

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker, that this program is run by the quasi-judicial OEB organization, and this comprehensive OESP ad buy that we're talking about was done by the OEB and it consists of print, radio and bus shelter advertisements. We want to ensure that we continue to work with MPPs' offices, with food banks—we're looking at every way possible to ensure that we can get the message out that this program is there and this program is there to help.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, back to the Acting Premier: Not only is the OESP enrolment very low; the Ontario Energy Board also reported that despite assist-

ance programs, families that are eligible for the OESP are still having trouble paying their bills. The number of OESP-eligible families that could not pay their bills jumped by 25% last year, and the average size of these unpaid bills was \$650, a 70% increase from two years ago. Money is clearly making its way to consultants and advertisers but it is not making it to the people who are in need.

What will the Acting Premier do to increase the OESP enrolment and to increase the amount of assistance available to those families?

1130

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, I'm very pleased to rise and discuss what we're doing as a government to ensure that we're helping families right across the province with their electricity bills.

First off, I know we're going to be debating Bill 13 a little later, to ensure that families right across the province will see an 8% reduction on their bill. For 330,000 families that are in rural or remote parts of our province—even folks in the northern part of the province, where I'm from—they will see a 20% reduction.

This is on top of the OESP program, in which they can qualify for up to \$45. It is a sliding scale. I encourage every MPP, I encourage everyone to talk about the OESP program to ensure that these families can get on it because we do have a great program. We have many programs in place.

He was talking about \$650, in some cases—with difficulty with paying their bills. The LEAP program helps families, with a \$600 emergency fund to help pay their bill.

We have many programs that help families right in this province.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Speaker, I was pleased to hear that yesterday the minister made an announcement on the use of segregation in our provincial jails. Segregation is a complex issue that nearly every jurisdiction is working to address, both within Canada and abroad.

Last year, our government set out to review the use of segregation in Ontario's correctional facilities, with a view to improve the conditions in segregation units and to explore alternative options. I understand that through this process the ministry consulted with mental health professionals, correctional staff, the Ombudsman, the human rights commissioner, civil liberties groups and a number of other stakeholders and experts. This resulted in a number of immediate action items that the minister announced yesterday, in addition to the appointment of an external reviewer to further inform Ontario's approach moving forward.

Can the minister please elaborate on the province's plan for segregation reform?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member from Brampton-Springdale for this important question.

After an internal review and extensive consultation with a wide range of experts on this issue, it's becoming clearer to me and to our government that in order to truly reform segregation in Ontario, a more thorough and comprehensive review into our correctional system needs to be conducted. That's why yesterday I announced that we'll be appointing an independent, external reviewer to take what we've learned in our initial review and to build upon these findings. This will include advice on reducing the number of people held in segregation and the length of time individuals spend in segregation; also, importantly, exploring alternatives to segregation, with a focus on vulnerable inmates, including those with acute mental health issues; as well as improving the conditions for those individuals who are held in segregation.

The reviewer will submit a final report, which will be made public and inform a provincial implementation plan as soon as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you to the minister for his response.

Reducing the use of segregation is a key part of a broader, system-wide transformation. To truly address this issue, we must continue to focus on addressing infrastructure and staffing challenges, providing greater health supports, and improving rehabilitative programming.

That's why I'm pleased that in addition to the appointment of an external reviewer, important changes were announced to improve the conditions of those currently in segregation, but also to take a look at the broader issues facing our system. This includes an assessment of existing capital infrastructure across the province, a review of current data collection practices to ensure that data is collected efficiently and consistently across the system, and work being done with the Ministry of Health to further enhance supports for vulnerable inmates and those with mental health issues.

Can the minister expand on the initiatives announced yesterday as part of our government's broader transformation of corrections?

Hon. David Oraziatti: Again, to the member from Brampton-Springdale, thank you for the supplementary.

Speaker, we've identified several changes that, effective immediately, will improve the living conditions of those in segregation. This includes establishing limits on its use, better managing individual cases, and improving the conditions in terms of when it's used.

We're also committed to a system-wide transformation of our correctional system. While the review is being conducted, we are taking action, Speaker. In fact, since 2013 we've hired over 1,100 new correctional officers. We've also hired 36 new mental health nurses. We've invested in body scanners that are being deployed in our institutions—\$9 million there that is reducing contraband into our institutions—as well as recently opening in London the regional intermittent centre, a 112-bed facility that is reducing overcrowding in the London-area detention centre.

Speaker, we're committed to making changes to segregation but also to overhauling the entire correctional system.

HYDRO REBATES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Energy. We've heard the minister claim that the government is responding to the hydro crisis, but it turns out that most rural Ontarians living in smaller towns do not qualify for the government's new rural or remote rate protection program.

The residents in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock are in desperate need of relief. Thousands of rural constituents have signed my petition calling on the government to reduce hydro prices, and yet most people in towns like Kinmount, Norland, Cobocok, Omeme, Bethany, Wilberforce, Gooderham, West Guilford, Woodville and Kirkfield will receive absolutely no relief from skyrocketing hydro bills.

By leaving our medium-density towns out, the government is actually increasing the energy poverty that they have unleashed on the people of Ontario. How can the government claim to be helping rural residents when so many towns won't qualify?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Well, I hope she is telling those towns that they will qualify for 8%. Some 330,000 families across the province in rural and remote parts of our province will receive that 20% benefit. That's a fact, Mr. Speaker. We've been saying that all along. For those who actually live in towns that aren't in rural and remote areas of the province, they will receive 8%.

On top of that, we already have removed the debt retirement charge. That's helping these families with \$70 a month. Then we have the OESP program, which they don't seem to want to promote. We do, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of this program. We understand that there are many families who are having a difficult time. The OESP program helps them. I sure hope that they promote that with these families, because it is a benefit for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Again to the Minister of Energy: Not long ago, all Ontarians received a 10% reduction on their hydro bills, courtesy of the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which this government decided to cancel. They've now replaced it with something that benefits some, while leaving the vast majority of Ontarians in the cold.

Only around 137,000 Hydro One customers have qualified for the Ontario energy support program. That's 137,000, when there are 1.5 million Hydro One customers in rural Ontario alone. It's a laughable substitute for real support for rural Ontarians.

Will the minister admit that their new plan leaves rural Ontarians worse off than they were before?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The only time rural Ontarians were worse off was when they were in power and left a crumbling system.

Here on this side of the House, we're making sure that every family gets that 8% reduction. We're making sure that they can qualify for the OESP program. If they don't qualify for the OESP program, we're making sure that we can actually help these families and look at programs that are available. We have six programs that are helping families right across the province.

We work with organizations like the United Way. I met with the executive director of the Bruce county United Way, and she talked to me about—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Simcoe-Grey, second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We're working with organizations like the United Way to talk about how we can even improve some of the programs that we have. They're out on the front lines. They have great ideas. It's great for us to have those conversations and continue to find ways to actually help families right across the province, and that's what we're doing.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. Londoners are not only waiting for hip and knee replacements; we also have a growing crisis with spine surgery wait times in London, which is just getting worse under this Liberal government.

My constituent Beverly Rodriguez waited six months for an MRI. Then she waited another six months to see a surgeon, and now she's being told that she'll have to wait up to nine more months to actually get the surgery she needs.

She wrote to me and said, "In the time I have been waiting, my symptoms have worsened and I have increasingly experienced a tremendous amount of pain, which has caused me to go to emergency four times. My life has deteriorated."

I have met with the London Health Sciences Centre, I have met with surgeons, I have met with the South West LHIN and, most importantly, I have listened to Londoners. My question is, what has this Liberal government done to address wait times in London and help people like Beverly?

1140

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, I can say that we are very focused on reducing wait times for patients. It's something we've been doing since we came to office. We began to measure wait times for the first time, and we're making specific investments to bring those wait times down. I'm going to be the first to say that we continue to have a challenge with wait times, but we are addressing them.

The last budget—which the member opposite voted against—invested more than \$345 million to publicly funded hospitals to provide better access to high-quality

health care, including an additional \$50 million specifically to improve access and wait times for hospital services, including hip and knee and spine surgeries.

We are focused on the issue. We have not solved the issue, but we are working very hard and very diligently on this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Acting Premier: People should not have to live with excruciating pain while waiting up to two years for spine surgery. Wait times are growing in London because this Liberal government refuses to provide proper funding for surgeries in our city. When will the Liberals stop ignoring people in London, people like Beverly Rodriguez, and start to properly fund health care and allocate increased money for more surgeries so that people can get the surgeries they so desperately need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Health is at a meeting today of health ministers from across the country: the provinces, the territories and the federal health minister. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance spoke very publicly about our need to receive more money from the federal government to do exactly this kind of work.

We are moving forward. We are making investments as we can, and we are working collaboratively with other health ministers across the provinces to improve funding for health care from the federal government.

CHILD CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Associate Minister of Education for early years and child care. Minister, across Ontario and in my riding of Ottawa South, families are benefitting from the implementation of full-day kindergarten. During the school day, parents can rely on knowing their children are in a safe learning environment.

It is important to remember that many families have to get up early in the morning or are unable to pick up their children immediately after school. So, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: What is the government doing to make sure that families have access to child care outside of school hours?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the member for this very important question. We all know that life today can be busy and challenging for parents, and the reality is that juggling a job, a family and child care can be stressful and often means heading to work early in the morning and picking up kids after the school bell has rung.

That is why we are building an early years and child care system that is flexible, high quality and meets the needs of parents and children. This means, starting September 2017, expanding before- and after-school care to better support more Ontario families. With the introduction of full-day kindergarten, school boards will now be required to provide before- and after-school care for four- and five-year-olds where there is sufficient parent demand, for children starting at age four and going all the way to age 12. I think this is fantastic.

If a school seeks an exemption, there must be a proven consensus between the local school board, First Nations and the local service system manager that before- and after-care is not required at that school.

I know this is going to help thousands of Ontario families.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I was remiss; I was just notified that my page Dylan Manary's father is here all the way from Greely, which is inside the city of Ottawa. I would like to welcome, on behalf of all members, Troy Manary to the Legislature today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I just want to take a minute to recognize Jamil Jivani, who is here joining us. He is a law professor at Osgoode and a great community organizer and a good friend. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Transportation, point of order.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I also was remiss earlier. I didn't have the chance to introduce a couple of guests: Timur Ermakov, who's a resident of Vaughan, and also Ghazal Haidary. Hopefully I haven't butchered that too badly.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy on a point of order.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you. During question period, the Leader of the Opposition asked me a question and I responded at some point by saying, "families that heat their home with heat." Obviously, that's what they do. What I meant to say was, "families that heat their home with electricity."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further points of order that are not points of order.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.
The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have some visitors in the gallery—two of them, actually: Carol Boehringer and Maggie Wakeford, both of them from OPSEU and working in mental health. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce Nathan Shaw. Nathan is my executive assistant, working with me in my role as parliamentary assistant to the Premier. He

has been here before and he has returned to Queen's Park. I'm glad to have him back.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to welcome to the Legislature some very important road safety partners. We have Pamela Fuselli—which I should be able to pronounce—and Valerie Smith from Parachute Canada, as well as Zac Stevenson from State Farm insurance. They're here in the Legislature today as part of National Teen Driver Safety Week. I'm very excited that they've joined us here today in the members' gallery.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DEREK VAN DIETEN

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: As we all know, our Toronto Blue Jays are in the midst of the post-season American East division against Cleveland.

I have some good news today: A dairy farmer from my riding of Huron–Bruce is giving us another great reason to cheer on the players to get as many home runs as possible. Today, I would like to acknowledge Derek Van Dieten, a dairy farmer from Seaforth, Ontario. Mr. Van Dieten will be donating 100 litres of milk to local food banks every time the Toronto Blue Jays hit a home run in their post-season.

So far the Jays, including last night, have hit 10 home runs during their playoff games, and that means that Mr. Van Dieten has already donated a total of 1,000 litres of milk this post-season alone.

This is not the first time that Mr. Van Dieten has donated. Last year he donated, in terms of milk, with the achievement of 14 home runs, 1,400 litres of milk.

This donation is just one of many that he gives during the year. I want to offer a sincere thank you to Mr. Van Dieten for the inspiring manner in which he demonstrates support not only for our local food banks but for our Toronto Blue Jays as well. I would like to encourage others to follow his example.

Just as I close, I just want to say that I hope there's more reason today for Mr. Van Dieten to donate more litres of milk. Go, Jays, go!

TIM CATHERWOOD

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I never get tired of talking about the great people in my riding of Essex and the great things that they achieve and contribute to.

Every year since 1978, the town of Essex has held their annual Citizen of the Year award banquet. This year they will honour Tim Catherwood for his outstanding service to the town.

I'm pleased to take a few moments to honour Tim here in the chamber to acknowledge some of his contributions. Tim's working career is very impressive and diverse. He has served in senior leadership positions in business, labour and the public sector. However, his lifetime of community involvement is even more impressive.

Tim has served or is currently serving as:

—the vice-chair of the Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare board of directors;

—the chair of the board of directors of the “Changing Lives Together” foundation;

—a member of the board of the United Way of Windsor and Essex county;

—the chair of the United Way campaign cabinet for 2015-16;

—a former chair of the board of directors of the teen health centre;

—a former co-chair of the board of the Windsor-Essex Community Health Centre; and

—a former member of the board of the Brain Injury Association of Windsor and Essex County.

Tim and his wife, Diane, live in Essex. They have three children and five grandchildren. Tim enjoys golf and is an avid sports fan, especially of the Oakland Raiders.

On behalf our entire community, thank you, Tim. Your leadership and dedication to the people of Windsor-Essex are inspirational. I look forward to joining you and everyone else at the banquet on October 22.

ONTARIO BENGALI CULTURAL SOCIETY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I’m pleased to rise and talk about a wonderful event that I attended in my riding of Scarborough Southwest this past weekend. On Saturday night at the Midland Avenue Collegiate Institute auditorium, the Ontario Bengali Cultural Society hosted a cultural event that brought together Bengali Canadian and international artists for an incredible night of music and dance.

I was fortunate to be one of the more than 1,000 people who took part in this event, and let me say that the performers gave us quite a show. Their talent, passion, creativity and pride in their culture were on full display and made for a truly unforgettable evening.

Bangladeshi Canadians have made countless significant contributions to our province, and this event served to highlight their important role in strengthening the multicultural fabric that keeps Ontario communities strong. I’d like to thank the Midland Avenue Collegiate Institute for hosting the event and the Ontario Bengali Cultural Society for their efforts to organize and put the show together. Of course, I’d like to give a huge thanks to the talented performers who shared their incredible artistic gifts with us.

It was truly a night I won’t soon forget, and I’m already looking forward to the next one. They’re very involved and they want to get more involved in the province, in Toronto and particularly in the riding of Scarborough Southwest.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I want to share with the House one of the letters that I’ve received far too many of from

constituents living in Dufferin-Caledon about their exorbitant hydro bills. Allow me to read excerpts from their letter:

“We’re a low-income family of four living in a small bungalow with electric everything.... What we don’t understand is why our delivery charges are almost as high as our electricity charges.

“We conserve energy as much as possible as you can see from our bills, which show we use the majority of our electricity on nonpeak hours.

“We have no air conditioning, but we run ceiling fans and other fans throughout the house to try to keep cool.... Why is my summertime bill so high? It shows we only used \$239 in actual electricity but it cost \$206 to deliver it?

“We could go on and on but the bottom line is, this needs to stop before we lose everything we have worked so hard for all of these years.”

This is just one of the many stories I hear regularly from families and businesses in my riding about their difficulty in paying their hydro bills. Our province has reached the point where hundreds of thousands of families are having difficulty paying their monthly hydro bills. Just last year, 567,000 residential electricity customers were in energy arrears.

This is unacceptable. It’s time for a real plan, and I urge the minister and the government to make real changes to make electricity affordable for Ontarians and businesses, so we can get Ontario back on track.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London South—oh, West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: No, London West.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did say that afterwards.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. Last month, I was pleased to attend the launch of the London chapter of the AODA Alliance, and would like to offer my congratulations to the new London co-chairs, Jeff Preston and Lisa Klinger. I also want to recognize David Lepofsky of the AODA Alliance, who was present for the launch and whose leadership and determination have contributed so much to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

With support across party lines and from the broader business community, the AODA held the promise of eliminating barriers facing Ontarians with disabilities. Yet despite the high hopes that accompanied its passage, the AODA has made little difference in the lives of Ontarians living with disabilities.

Frustrated by the limited gains achieved after a decade of provincial advocacy, local chapters of the AODA Alliance are being formed across Ontario, as in my community of London, to push for change at the community level.

While the government’s recent agreement to develop a health standard in accessibility is welcome, another standard is meaningless if it is not enforced. There has

been no commitment on the development of an essential standard for education, both K to 12 and post-secondary.

Multiple reports on the Liberal government's lack of progress in meeting the 2025 AODA deadlines raised serious questions about this government's commitment to accessibility. Without strengthened standards and rigorous enforcement, there is no hope that we will achieve a fully accessible Ontario by 2025.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I want to share a story about a four-and-a-half-year-old boy from Hamilton I once knew who, because his mother experienced a period of poor health, went to live with his grandmother in downtown Hamilton. One day this adventurous lad rode his tricycle down Bay Street, all the way to Main Street. He thought it was the steepest hill in the world. At the bottom he was frightened. He discovered he was quite a long way from home, and no matter how hard he tried, Speaker, he was unable to ride his tricycle back up the hill.

1510

A young man came along and, sensing the boy's distress, asked if he could help. He did help, by carrying the boy's trike under his arm and walking the boy back home.

It turns out the man was a part-time YMCA staffer. He spoke to the boy's grandmother, suggesting the boy become involved with the YMCA. For years, that boy thought his 25 cents every three months paid for his membership.

The boy made new friends, became more confident and developed skills that helped equip him to cope with the challenges of growing up. The YMCA saw this young boy not as a child of limited means but as a person of unlimited potential. That boy was me.

While much has changed since that tricycle ride down the hill, one thing remains: Many in my community are committed to being difference-makers.

I recently had a chance to celebrate work being done by two organizations in this city, Dundas Routes Youth Centre and CityKidz, both doing incredible work with inner-city kids.

Organizations like these try to make our beloved city a better place to live. They transform lives each and every day, one child at a time. Rather than curse the darkness, these community organizations dedicate themselves to lighting candles of hope. They do so with passion and resolve.

Today, I want to thank them for their courage, leadership and service, and their willingness to always help a little guy up the hill.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to highlight concerns recently brought to my attention by members of CUPE Local 2049, representing the Children's Aid Society of the District of Nipissing and Parry Sound.

They brought up a number of concerns. Of the issues raised, the most pressing was the apparent clawback in funding. Funding has become so restrictive that local CASs have been forced to cut any unmandated programs, there is no training allowance available, workers have been forced to reduce physiological assessments, offices are vacancy-managing mandated programs, and enrichment options formerly available to children have been cut. This is resulting in overburdened front-line workers.

How can we expect these workers to provide the support mandated by the ministry to the children under their care when we do not support the workers themselves?

In one instance, the Parry Sound district CAS was forced to cut its foster parent recruitment position, resulting in the decline in the number of foster parents. This has forced the CAS to use privatized group homes more often for longer periods of time. Financially, a private home can cost between \$100 and \$300 per day per child. A foster family, on the other hand, is paid \$29 per day per child. Beyond the obvious higher cost of group homes, we must ask, what is best for the child?

Recent office closures have been concerning as well. In a recent merger, the Burk's Falls office was closed and workers relocated to North Bay. Through this process, the front-line workers in Burk's Falls were given just five days' notice of the impending changes.

In the push to modernize our children's aid services, it is imperative that we make sure that our actions here at Queen's Park create more stable and more caring environments for children in our care, and not the other way around.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Kanetix.ca just released a report saying that Brampton is now the most expensive city in all of Ontario to insure your vehicle.

What makes it worse is that this government has so horribly failed the people of Ontario by allowing the insurance industry to continue to cut coverage to the point that they slashed benefits for catastrophically impaired people. These are the most seriously injured people in the province, and this government has slashed their coverage.

In addition, to make matters even worse, the premiums are now going up in this province. They've recently approved rate increases of 12%.

Mr. Speaker, this is simply deplorable. People in this province are struggling to pay their insurance premiums. They're seeing their benefits slashed by this government—they're allowing insurance companies to do that—and on top of that, this government is now allowing the insurance industry to increase their rates.

We're seeing less coverage and fewer benefits, but increased premiums. This government has a responsibility to ensure that premiums are fair. This government has a responsibility to ensure that insurance companies don't exploit the people of this province, but they're not doing that job.

The people of this province are being exploited and the insurance companies are making record profits, and the fault lies squarely at the feet of this Liberal government.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: October is Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario. For the second year in a row, Hispanic Heritage Month will honour the more than 400,000 Ontarians of Hispanic descent and serve as a chance to remember, elevate and educate future generations about the achievements of our Hispanic-Latino community. I know that this year, just like last year, October will bring the entire Hispanic-Latino community together to celebrate Ontario's diversity.

I'm privileged to represent the great riding of Davenport, which has such an active and engaged Hispanic-Latino community.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of October, I attended the start of Hispanic Heritage Month in Davenport with a Mayan Sacred Fire Ceremony organized by members of the Hispanic Canadian Heritage Council. I also attended Latinicious, a fantastic food truck festival celebrating the flavours of the over 20 different cultures of Latin America.

My office also celebrated the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month with an art gallery opening in my constituency office. The exhibits feature artwork from Casa Cultural Colombiana, the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre Spanish seniors' group, and performances from a talented Spanish-speaking seniors' group called Bailando Forever.

It was great to start Hispanic Heritage Month in Davenport with all of these celebrations.

At Queen's Park, as well, we celebrated all things Hispanic-Latino.

I had the pleasure of helping launch Hispanic Heritage Week in Hamilton, a great celebration organized by Asociación Fraternidad Hispana.

It is clear that the events around Hispanic Heritage Month keep growing every year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated October 18, 2016, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la justice. Je propose son adoption.

Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption and send it to you via page Suryakant from Etobicoke North.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, without amendment:

Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity /
Projet de loi 13, Loi concernant le coût de l'électricité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the orders of the House dated September 28, 2016, and October 3, 2016, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PANDAS/PANS AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION AU PANDAS/PANS

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to proclaim PANDAS/PANS Awareness Day /
Projet de loi 43, Loi proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation au PANDAS/PANS.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Very simply, this bill would proclaim that October 9 of each year be declared PANDAS/PANS Awareness Day.

BANGLADESHI HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE BANGLADAIS

Mr. Berardinetti moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to proclaim the month of March as Bangladeshi Heritage Month /
Projet de loi 44, Loi proclamant le mois de mars Mois du patrimoine bangladais.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

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Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's pretty straightforward. The bill proclaims the month of March in each year as Bangladeshi Heritage Month. The Bangladeshi community is a group of new immigrants who are coming into Toronto and the GTA, and we should recognize their importance and their contribution to Ontario and to Canada.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to stand in my place this afternoon and to deliver some remarks with respect to an important milestone. This week marks the fourth annual National Teen Driver Safety Week. This is a week that is dedicated to driving change, to stopping the clock on teen deaths on Ontario's roads, and to finding solutions that work, community by community.

I am absolutely thrilled to recognize one of MTO's very important road safety partners, Parachute. Representatives from Parachute are here, as I mentioned earlier today. I want to thank Parachute for leading this critical campaign and for all the work they do to help prevent injuries and save lives.

Sadly, Speaker, the statistics show that teen drivers are overrepresented when it comes to injuries and fatalities on our roads. They are about 40% more likely to be killed or injured in motor vehicle collisions as compared to the general population. When it comes to distracted driving collisions, again, too many teens—over 1,200 in Ontario, according to the 2013 ORSAR stats—have been killed or injured in collisions.

In a recent survey, half of all teens admitted to texting while they were driving. This is a growing problem, and not just among teens, of course. Research indicates that any driver who uses a cellphone is four times more likely to be in an accident. If current collision trends continue, fatalities from distracted driving will exceed those from drinking and driving in the very near future. In fact, law enforcement tells us that those numbers are shifting very aggressively.

Equally alarming are the numbers we're seeing for teen drivers and drug use. Of teen drivers who died in an accident, about one in four tested positive for drugs. The bottom line is that we need to do better. Even one teenaged driver fatality is simply one too many, which of course brings me to this year's campaign focus on distracted and drug-impaired driving.

From social media, like #gethomesafe, to the hundreds of community events, community ambassadors and downloadable toolkits, Parachute is helping to lead

change, to raise awareness and to find solutions for the tragic consequences—to prevent the tragic consequences—of distracted and drug-impaired driving.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with our valued road safety partner, and we've already started to take action. Last year, the Ontario government got tougher with drivers who still aren't getting the message on distracted driving, by escalating penalties for novice drivers convicted of distracted driving, increasing the fine to \$490 and up to \$1,000, and applying three demerit points upon conviction.

Just this past summer, we launched the ministry's largest integrated social marketing and media campaign on distracted driving, known as "It happens fast. Put down the phone." This campaign was launched on television, radio, online and at Cineplex Odeon theatres across the province. The campaign, as many here will know, encourages people to share their commitment on social media to #putdownthephone so that they can see the road. People are talking, sharing and getting involved by taking the pledge. We're getting traction, and we are hopeful that we will see a reduction in injuries and fatalities on our roads.

Earlier this month, we also announced tougher penalties for drivers who are impaired by drugs. These penalties include licence suspensions, fines, and mandatory treatment and education programs. Of course, we continue to work with our road safety partners to deliver important public education messages to help tackle drug-impaired driving.

Ontario is recognized as a world-class leader in road safety because of our tough laws, because of our strong enforcement, because of our partnerships and because of our public education campaigns. And, without a doubt, thanks to the dedicated work of our valued road safety partners like Parachute, we are in a stronger position than would otherwise be the case.

Speaker, I am proud to stand here today to mark this important initiative because we recognize that everyone, from those who are novice drivers to the most seasoned drivers on Ontario's roads, should be safe and protected on our highways, on our roads and in our communities. The people of Ontario—again, both our teenage and young drivers and those of all ages—deserve no less.

AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize Autism Awareness Month, which takes place each October. Before I get started, I'd like to just acknowledge the children, youth, parents and advocates here in Ontario, and thank them for the time they've taken over the last few months to talk to me and to work with me to ensure that we can move the autism file along. I know that the work that they do every single day takes a lot of courage. I understand the realities that parents face every single day, and I just want to say thank you so much.

I look forward to meeting more families and caregivers over the next few months, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the commitment to those who work every day in communities across the province to support children, youth and adults with autism. Thank you for your continued perseverance, and please keep up the great work. Our children depend on it.

Mr. Speaker, it's my goal as minister responsible for children and youth here in the province of Ontario to ensure that young people have the best opportunity to find success in Ontario. That commitment extends, of course, to children with autism. Our government is dedicated to providing children and families with autism with the best possible supports today and in the future. That's why, Mr. Speaker, Ontario recently made the most substantial public investment into autism. We've announced an unprecedented investment of more than half a billion dollars over the next five years to enhance services and to better meet the needs of children and families here in Ontario.

These are often complex needs. Autism is life-long. It is complex. The symptoms can vary significantly, and range in severity in each and every child. From a clinical standpoint we know it means that every child with ASD needs unique treatment and, more importantly, we know that this means that every child with ASD has unique potential. We're committed to helping them achieve that potential.

The new autism program here in Ontario will begin to be implemented in June 2017 and will foster development and provide more flexible, tailored and individualized services to all children and youth with autism. It will completely transform our current system to better match the needs of families. Mr. Speaker, what we're going to do is create a single point of entry, making it easier for families to access service. We're going to open up 16,000 new service spaces for families with autism. Wait times will be significantly reduced, and all children, regardless of age, will receive flexible services based on their needs. This will mark a major milestone in how autism services are delivered to children and youth here in our province. I am proud to be steering this change together with families, clinicians and advocates.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that families have many questions as we move closer to that date in June of next year. I understand that transition periods can be very challenging, especially when we're talking about families. That is why our government announced that we'll start the implementation a year sooner, in June 2017. We're making sure that families are well supported during the transition to the new program. Families of children who are transitioning from the IBI wait-list can access funds to help them get their services and supports they need for their children until the new Ontario Autism Program begins.

We're also helping families access an autism diagnosis earlier so children can get treatment as soon as possible. We're doing this by increasing the diagnostic services through five regional hubs.

As a parent, Mr. Speaker, I want nothing more than what's best for my children. I know that parents all

across the province feel the same. I am committed to continuing to meet with parents and caregivers to hear the issues and concerns. I want to know first-hand what's working and what's not working. By listening, we'll have a clear understanding of the challenges that parents face on a day-to-day basis so we can better understand and respond to their needs.

1530

To parents, I'd like to say: Thank you very much for sharing your input and for partnering with us. We cannot implement substantial change without your guidance and without your families' experience.

I'd be remiss to not acknowledge our work with other government ministries as we begin to move closer to our new autism program here in the province. Enhancing our services requires a holistic approach, which is why we're working closely with the Ministry of Education to strengthen our school supports to help children and youth transition into and continue in school on a full-time basis. Publicly funded school boards are receiving funds to support children transitioning into school during the new autism transition period. School boards will also be eligible for funding for after-school development programming.

We're also working closely with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to improve employment supports for young people with autism. All of these collective efforts are making a huge difference, and they will continue to make a huge difference.

We know we can always do better. A big part of doing better is about understanding more about autism spectrum disorder itself. Because of its complexity, there is so much more we need to learn to better understand autism. Over the last few years, a great deal of research has been done here in the province of Ontario, and every year we are learning more.

Statistics tell us that in Ontario, we have approximately 40,000 young people with autism, and we're told that this number is going to increase year after year. Since 2004, our government has invested more than \$21 million in more than 20 autism research initiatives. We're also supporting research in neurodevelopment, including autism, through a \$12.5-million investment over five years in the Ontario Brain Institute.

As we move towards implementation of our new autism program, we're also going to continue to seek advice from our clinical expert committee. We've also established an advisory committee of parents, stakeholders, service providers and other experts to provide advice on the design and implementation of this new program. I look forward to continuing to work with the Minister of Education, the Minister of Community and Social Services, families and stakeholders as we design and implement this new program.

In closing, I just want to say to all the parents out there: Thank you so much for the work you've done. Thank you for your advocacy. I'd like to thank my critics for the work that they've done, and I want to say that together we can move forward to build an autism program that every Ontarian can be proud of.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is time for responses.

NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK

Mr. Michael Harris: I always appreciate the opportunity to talk about driver safety in this House. I welcome the chance today to recognize the importance of National Teen Driver Safety Week. As we join with Parachute and others in this important annual public awareness campaign to educate young drivers about road safety, I'm hoping that those listening in this House and across Ontario will take the time to offer their support by pledging to the #gethomesafe campaign.

Speaker, when we consider the sobering thought that while young people only make up 12% of licensed drivers, they account for approximately 20% of all road-related injuries and fatalities, it's clear that more must be done by all of us to address these numbers directly.

This year, National Teen Driver Safety Week is asking us to focus on both distracted driving—a factor in two out of 10 of those fatal collisions—and drug-impaired driving. Simply put, drugs and driving don't mix. The fact that one out of four teen drivers who die in crashes test positive for cannabis bears that out. Meanwhile, research on distracted driving shows that texting behind the wheel is equivalent to driving with your eyes closed for almost five seconds. So every time your teen driver thinks of tapping out a text, ask them if they would want to put a blindfold on.

While it's true that drivers have a responsibility to ensure that they are distraction-free when behind the wheel, Parachute is also reminding us that passengers have a role to play to ensure that drivers' eyes are focused where they should be: on the road.

A recent survey of Canadian drivers found that 96% of drivers would stop driving distracted if a passenger asked them to. Simply asking can save your life and others. And so, as safety on our roads is a shared responsibility, I encourage all of those listening to join with our road safety partners in marking National Teen Driver Safety Week, and ensure that our young drivers and their passengers get home safe.

AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of the PC caucus to recognize October as Autism Awareness Month. The minister's words were positive, but let's not forget that earlier this year, this government threatened the services that exist for children with autism. In March, this government announced changes to our province's autism program, including removing children over the age of five from accessing intensive behavioural intervention therapy.

Right after that announcement was made, my colleagues and I shared many stories from families across the province who were devastated by the government's

decision to cut off children from IBI. Day after day, my leader Patrick Brown and the PC caucus shared these concerns in question period and shared stories of children who had benefited from IBI therapy, regardless of their age.

Even after the government's own expert panel warned that removing children over five would have a detrimental impact on their lives, the government continued sticking to their talking points. This left hundreds of families in a state of fear and uncertainty as to whether their child would lose out on accessing this life-changing therapy.

After months of opposition from parents, experts, municipalities, both opposition parties and organizations from across Ontario, the government finally reversed their decision, but there is still much work to do. While I'm happy that the government has reversed their decision, it should never have taken this long, and the fact of the matter is, their original decision should never have happened in the first place.

We still need to concentrate on the transition between young people and when they go to school, and the transition when young people graduate, leave school and go into their communities.

In support of raising awareness about autism spectrum disorder, I would encourage everyone to read *Autism: The Gift That Needs to Be Opened* by the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador. This book is a collection of stories by families, experts and individuals with autism. Three individuals from my riding contributed to the book. I'd like to thank Krista Preuss-Goudreault and Michael and Doug McCreary for sharing their stories.

It's efforts like this book and the advocates volunteering in our community that help ASD and foster an understanding for families, for community partners, for educators and for governments.

NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath, as well as our NDP Ontario transportation critic, Wayne Gates, and speak to the fourth annual National Teen Driver Safety Week in Ontario.

As a mother of two children, teen driver safety is both a professional and personal priority. My youngest son, Jacobb, will be writing his beginner's this year, and my daughter has recently begun driving. These are the generation of drivers that we are talking about today.

Every year, parents across Ontario are devastated by the loss or injury of their children on the roads. I think all members in this chamber will agree that no parent, no sibling and no friend should have to answer a call informing them their loved one has been injured or killed on our roads.

This week challenges us to raise awareness and seek solutions to improve teen driver safety in Ontario. In

recent years, distracted and drug-impaired driving have created new challenges for all drivers on the road, as well as our police and other first responders who work to keep everyone on the road safe.

Our young people are the most connected, technologically advanced generation to ever drive on our roads. Hand-held devices were well established when they started driving, and creating a separation between driving and communicating through text or social media is a new challenge. While Ontario teens need to understand the dangers of distracted driving, I would be remiss not to mention that this is a challenge for all drivers. I think our seasoned and experienced drivers have a duty to lead by example. My colleague the member for Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake once said that we need to address the issue of distracted driving every year. I could not agree more.

As new technologies are developed each year that work to improve our lives, we must remember that hand-held devices threaten our concentration while driving. We must constantly re-examine our approach to distracted and drug-impaired driving to ensure our efforts are efficient and effective.

I'd like to thank the minister for his comments today and I hope all members of this chamber can work together to improve teen driver safety in Ontario.

1540

AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to speak today on behalf of the NDP caucus to recognize Autism Awareness Month. I would say there has been a significant increase in autism awareness throughout Ontario over the past year. Unfortunately, it was for all the wrong reasons.

After being embarrassed last November by the size of wait-lists for both IBI and ABA, this government proceeded to try to manage those wait-lists by simply declaring that some of the children on those lists were no longer eligible. People with autism and their families—parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles—as well as friends rallied the government to let them know that they were wrong. In the thousands, they fought to make the government aware that what they were doing was not based in evidence and was fundamentally unfair to children over the age of five. In doing that, they raised awareness all across Ontario about what autism is and how this government had mistreated them. Thanks to those activists, the government backed down on its policy last June, after months of digging in their heels and insisting that they were right.

New rules have been brought in. But, Speaker, there is still plenty of confusion in the community about what this program means for children with autism. There is a lack of consistency of information that parents are getting. Children are being shipped into ABA programs of a few hours here and there, which is completely inadequate to meet their needs. Children with autism are entering a school system that is severely under-resourced to deal with the influx.

Speaker, awareness is more than knowing that autism exists and how prevalent it is. Awareness is about understanding the impact it has on people. It is about recognizing the long-term effects of not providing proper therapy when it is needed. That awareness has to start with the minister. I urge the minister to review the entire file and build a system that ensures that all people with ASD get the treatment they need when they need it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario families and businesses have seen their hydro costs more than triple under the Liberal government since 2003;

"Whereas the Liberal government's unaffordable Green Energy Act, the \$2 billion wasted on the smart meter program and the \$1.1 billion wasted on the cancelled gas plants will translate into a further 42% increase in hydro bills over five years;

"Whereas the Auditor General revealed that the Liberal government has collected approximately \$50 billion over the last decade through a global adjustment tax on hydro bills largely used to subsidize exorbitant green energy contracts;

"Whereas the Liberal government has allowed peak hydro rates to increase by 15% on May 1"—so this is from last spring;

"Whereas the Liberal government's elimination of the clean energy benefit will mean an average increase in hydro bills of \$137 per year;

"Whereas the Liberal government's planned sale of a majority share of Hydro One will mean higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call on the Liberal government to protect Ontario families and businesses from further hydro increases by applying all proceeds from the sale of Hydro One to the \$27-billion electricity debt and imposing a moratorium on any new industrial wind and solar projects."

I'm happy to put my name on it.

DISASTER RELIEF

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to present this petition with signatures from 1,268 people representing 81 different municipalities that were collected during the protest on Highway 144 last Monday. It reads as follows:

"Gogama Needs Help.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas at 2 a.m. on March 7, 2015, a Canadian National train derailed in Gogama;

"Whereas this derailment caused numerous ... cars carrying crude oil to explode, catch fire and spill over" four million litres of oil "into the Makami River; and

"Whereas residents continue to plainly observe oil and find dead fish in the Makami River as well as Lake Minisinakwa, despite the fact that the Ministry of the Environment has declared the cleanup complete;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Environment require CN to continue the cleanup of Gogama's soil and waterways until the residents are assured of clean and safe water for themselves, the environment and the wildlife."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Suryakant to bring it to the Clerk.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is a growing energy affordability crisis in Ontario; and

"Whereas the government's proposed hydro rebate is a band-aid solution that's simply too little, too late;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Liberal government to take immediate action to give the people of Ontario real relief from high energy bills."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to lower the cost of hydro. This is from the good people in Etobicoke, who are sick and tired of the price of hydro.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current Liberal government took office; and

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the Liberal government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this Liberal government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;"

Therefore, "We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

Speaker, I support this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table with Do En.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to thank Christine Gates from Windsor for signing this petition. It's entitled "Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being offloaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

"Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics."

I could not support this more. I wholeheartedly support it, will sign my name to it and send to the desk with Yasmine.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by thousands of Ontarians from Oxford and from all over the province who are now sending them in.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current Liberal government took office; and

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

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"Whereas the energy policies of this Liberal government ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator, and resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province; and

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

Mr. Speaker, I sign this petition because I wholeheartedly agree with it.

SHINGLES VACCINE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition signed by people from across Windsor and Essex county.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario announced that starting September 15, 2016, the shingles vaccine would be available to all seniors 65 years to 70 years free of charge (until December 31, 2016, any senior born in 1945 is also eligible);

"Whereas seniors over the age of 70 years will still be required to pay for the vaccine if they choose;

"Whereas the government of Ontario claims that studies show that the vaccine is highly effective when seniors are vaccinated between the ages of 65 and 70 and will not cover the vaccine for all Ontario seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"This is unfair to seniors over the age of 70 and we urge the government to expand the coverage so that all Ontario seniors are eligible for the free shingles vaccine."

I fully agree. I will affix my name and give it to my friend Kepler to bring down to the desk.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition from hundreds of people in Parry Sound-Muskoka with regard to electricity costs. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current government took office; and

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

I support this petition, Mr. Speaker, and have signed it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further petitions?

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to thank Claire Reeves of London for signing this petition.

"Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals ...; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

"Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics."

I sign this petition and give it page Yasmine to deliver to the table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space as it was built for a mere 7,000" emergency room visits annually "and experiences in excess of 33,000 visits" each year; "and

"Whereas the government-implemented Places to Grow Act forecasts massive population growth in New Tecumseth" and Alliston, "which along with the aging population will only intensify the need for the redevelopment of the hospital; and

"Whereas all other hospital emergency facilities are more than 45 minutes away with no public transit available between those communities; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government immediately provide the necessary funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital for the redevelopment of their emergency department, operating rooms, diagnostic imaging and laboratory to ensure that they can continue to provide stable and ongoing service to residents in our area."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the petition and I certainly will sign it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over the north. I would like to thank Elizabeth

and Douglas Duvall from my riding, in Val Caron. It reads as follows:

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

"Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further petitions?

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current Liberal government took office;

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment;

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss;

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the Liberal government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount;

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating;

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills;

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this Liberal government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs

associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

I totally agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and I'll send it to the table with Carter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions has now expired.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO REBATE FOR ELECTRICITY CONSUMERS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA REMISE DE L'ONTARIO POUR LES CONSOMMATEURS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr. Thibeault moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity /
Projet de loi 13, Loi concernant le coût de l'électricité.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we proceed to third reading of the proposed Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, I want to review what this bill would achieve and why our government has introduced it.

When the Premier asked me to take on the Minister of Energy role four months ago, my mandate was clear: to ensure that electricity was as affordable as can be for all Ontarians. As members of this House will know, I'm formerly an executive director of the United Way in Greater Sudbury; and as an elected representative of Ontario's north, this mandate strikes particularly close to home for me.

I know the importance of electricity costs to peoples' everyday lives. I know that despite consistent economic growth since the global recession, many families, both in the north and elsewhere, haven't begun to feel Ontario's economic resurgence in their everyday lives. The Ontario government recognizes these challenges, and we are committed to an affordable electricity supply. When I took on this portfolio, it was important to me that we act without delay to help Ontario families and businesses manage their bills.

Passing the proposed Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act is an important step in that undertaking. Starting in just a couple of months, this bill would provide significant, immediate and permanent electricity rate relief to about five million eligible consumers across the province.

Let me recap what is proposed in this legislation: If passed, this act would take effect this coming January 1. It would provide an 8% rebate for consumers eligible for the regulated price plan as set out by the Ontario Energy Board. These consumers are about five million residents,

farms and small businesses. This 8% rebate, equivalent to Ontario's share of the HST, would bring an average residential consumer a savings of about \$130; that's \$130 annually.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you recall from previous statements, the proposed legislation is just one part of a comprehensive package of reforms that would take effect on the same timeline. The timeline we have proposed is ambitious because we know that Ontarians are looking for this support. That's why it's so important that this bill be passed quickly. Our partners at local distribution companies in municipalities across the province need the time and clarity provided by the swift passage of this bill, in order to ensure that they can make the changes necessary to provide the rebate to their customers.

We are also introducing measures to help rural customers, businesses, and commercial and industrial electricity users. For rural customers, our government will be updating the rural or remote rate protection program to increase the amount of available funding for approximately 330,000 eligible customers.

This proposed funding increase to the RRRP and the 8% rebate will result in electricity relief of approximately \$45 per month for eligible RRRP customers, or \$540 every year. For businesses, we are proposing to lower the threshold for participating in the industrial conservation initiative, from three megawatts to one megawatt. This program, Mr. Speaker, incentivizes businesses shifting their consumption away from peak hours, which provides two benefits.

First, it helps businesses reduce their own costs, increasing their flexibility and competitiveness; and second, it also reduces electricity system costs as a whole because shifting consumption helps defer the need for new-build peaking generation.

In addition to these programs, our government has committed that under the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, all proceeds from Ontario's cap-and-trade program will be deposited into a new Greenhouse Gas Reduction Account. In turn, every dollar from this account will be transparent, invested back into projects that reduce greenhouse gas pollution and help businesses save energy.

The Ministry of Energy is proposing to recycle proceeds to offset the impact of cap-and-trade on the largest industrial electricity consumers to keep rates affordable. This means that under the proposed electricity price mitigation strategy, proceeds from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Account will be recycled to industrial consumers, as our government committed in the 2016 budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to review why we believe this legislation is the right approach. The Ontario government is committed to an electricity system and electricity supply that is clean, modern, reliable and affordable. But that's not the system that we inherited when we came into office. Back then, our electricity system was faced with shortages, a dependence on coal, and aging infrastructure.

But over the last decade, we have rebuilt our transmission and distribution grid and we have closed the last dirty coal-fired power plant. I'm especially proud that we have been replacing coal with clean sources of energy. Our province has been investing in a system that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and provides cleaner air for this and future generations of Ontarians.

Today, Ontario has over 18,000 megawatts of wind, solar, bioenergy, and hydroelectric energy contracted or online. Our significant investments in renewable energy have helped us to fulfill our commitment to replace coal-fired generation with cleaner sources of energy. This not only benefits our environment but also the health of Ontarians.

Each of our supply mix elements, including hydroelectric, nuclear, natural gas, wind, solar, bioenergy, conservation and clean imports plays a unique role in delivering a reliable and cost-effective source of energy to Ontarians. The diversity of the current supply mix also insulates Ontario against sudden changes in cost or availability of any one source, and is one of the greatest strengths of Ontario's electricity system.

What's more, our investments in rebuilding aging transmission infrastructure and transitioning off of coal-fired generation mean we're already well on our way with an electricity system for the future.

As a result of these investments, we are not expecting to see the kind of energy cost increases that will face coal-dependent provinces and US states as they transition to cleaner forms of electricity generation. Instead, we can look forward to the future with confidence, backed by a power grid that is already clean, already modern, and reliable.

However, we know that these significant investments have put cost pressures on some families. That's why this government has used a variety of public policy levers to mitigate rate pressure for consumers. For example, we worked to reduce system costs, saving money for all ratepayers, and some of these actions include:

- renegotiating the Green Energy Investment Agreement to reduce contract costs by about \$3.7 billion;

- deferring the construction of new nuclear, avoiding an estimated \$15 billion in new construction costs, and approving the OPG plans to seek regulatory approval to extend the life of the Pickering generating station;

- consistently reducing feed-in tariff—the FIT program—and microFIT prices through annual price reviews, saving ratepayers at least \$1.9 billion; and

- suspending the second round of the Large Renewable Procurement process and the Energy-from-Waste Standard Offer Program, for a savings of up to \$3.8 billion in costs relative to Ontario's 2013 long-term energy plan forecast.

In addition, we have introduced targeted measures to Ontario's many different customers—urban, rural, business, industrial, and north and south. We removed the debt retirement charge from residential electricity bills, saving the average homeowner around \$65 per year.

For low-income Ontarians, the Ontario Energy Board introduced the Ontario Electricity Support Program, or

OESP, which offers monthly credits from \$30 to \$50. Customers with unique electricity needs—and I think it's important to mention this—such as medical devices can be eligible for an even higher level of assistance, up to \$75 a month. More than 145,000 people have already signed up for the OESP since it was launched in January of this year.

The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit and the Northern Ontario Energy Credit also serve low-income Ontarians. These are on top of the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, or LEAP, which was introduced in 2011. LEAP includes emergency financial assistance, special provisions and energy conservation programs to help customers in financial difficulty.

As for the commercial sector, Ontario needs its businesses and industries to succeed, grow and create good jobs. That's why we have been helping them manage electricity costs with the saveONenergy for Business electricity conservation program, the Five-Point Small Business Energy Savings Plan, the Industrial Accelerator Program, demand response auction, and the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program. And, of course, there is also the ICI program.

1610

The expansion of the ICI program that we're proposing would empower eligible businesses to reduce their bills by one third. The current ICI program currently has 300 businesses in it. The new program, once this bill passes and if this bill passes, would allow over 1,000 businesses in our province to participate in this program. The important thing to mention about this is that it's a win-win for us because if you look at the opportunity of the 300 businesses that are currently in the program, they actually saved 800 megawatts of peak generating power. That's like not having to build two nuclear units. In turn, that saves the entire system from having to upgrade and build more generation, which actually would then help us keep the costs low.

In conclusion, we've spent more than a decade building a clean, reliable and safe electricity system. As the government approaches a balanced budget next year, we believe the first beneficiaries should be Ontario families. The legislation we are proposing would help families, farms and small businesses across the province, and the other elements of our plan would provide rural ratepayers and Ontario businesses with additional relief. Taken together, this is a comprehensive package that would help ensure electricity is affordable for homes, farms and businesses across Ontario.

I'm pleased to be debating this legislation for third reading and look forward to its speedy passage to ensure that Ontarians can begin to take advantage of the electricity savings provided for in this act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not sure whether the minister has been speaking to his House leader or not, but it will have quick passage because you've already determined that by invoking time allocation on the bill.

Tomorrow, after question period, this bill will pass third reading because you people have the majority and the reality is that we're going to support the bill. We have supported it since you brought it in—not because we support the energy policy of this government, but because we're looking for any way that we, in the PC caucus and the PC Party, can find to support ratepayers in the province of Ontario who have been so badly damaged and injured by the policies of this government.

Interestingly enough—I'll just start in no particular order—the minister talked about the ICI program. A thousand businesses, he says now. Well, you know, the CFIB was in town here the other day. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business: 42,000 members representing half a million employees. It's not going to help them very much. Most of their businesses simply can't participate. But every one of those small businesses is suffering under the energy policies of this government and cannot afford to pay their hydro bills. Where is the help for those small businesses?

We've talked and we're going to continue to talk about the ratepayers, the consumers and the families that have been injured so badly and are hurting so badly because of the energy policies and the price of electricity in this province, but we can't forget our small businesses as well—the backbone of our economy. Over 90% of the jobs created in this economy are from small businesses, and we can't forget them.

He talks about the industries, and that's important. That's an important component as well. Interestingly enough, I spoke to an industry in my riding. I met with them last week. In 2009, they were doing about \$25 million in business. Their business was destroyed by fire. They relocated as quickly as possible. They're doing about the same amount of business today, but their hydro bill is three times what it was in 2009. And not only that, but in that interim period, they've done everything possible to make their business more energy efficient. They've installed all kinds of brand-new high-efficiency equipment, high-efficiency lighting and all of those things and yet their hydro bill continues to skyrocket. They've taken all the measures to reduce their usage, but their hydro bill skyrockets. Why? Because of the policies of this government and the contracts that they continued to sign throughout that period. They took away the municipalities' right to be self-determinant about whether or not there would be energy projects in their communities. They took away that right of municipalities, and now those projects are built and the price of hydro has gone through the roof.

When we were at the hearings for Bill 13, interestingly enough—and they were limited as well. I know that very few members in our caucus had the ability to speak to this bill—not that they didn't have the ability—the opportunity to speak to this bill. I know my friends in the third party did not have most of their members given the opportunity to speak to this bill as well. Then the hearings were truncated as well: one day of hearings here in the city of Toronto, not all across Ontario, where the

people are hurting the most, in the rural communities here in the province of Ontario.

I wanted to just take some excerpts from one person who called in—her testimony was compelling—a lady by the name of Norma Schmidt: I'll just read directly from Hansard, if I may, Speaker.

“Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Norma Schmidt. I live in rural Ontario, on the shores of Lake Huron. I am a 60-year-old retired nurse, and have had my life turned upside down by this irresponsible Liberal government. It would take too long to tell my story. Suffice it to say, it has been accomplished in a way that has caused havoc to my life.”

I'll read on further: “The Liberal government's policies related to energy, and particularly the Green Energy Act, are devastating not only for the poor, but for the economy and the environment, and are noxious to the lives of those who live in rural Ontario.

“The Auditor General this year reported that Ontarians paid \$37 billion above market price for electricity. The so-called 8% rebate is a sham and, I believe, a seat-saver for the Liberal government.”

She goes on to say, further down: “If this government was serious about reducing energy prices, they would stop signing contracts for green energy projects, cancel existing wind and solar contracts, and stop selling Ontario's assets, such as Ontario Hydro”—what she means is Hydro One. “The Auditor General reported that the electricity component of energy bills rose by 70% from 2006 to 2014 and that it will cost consumers another \$133 billion extra over the next 17 years.”

She finishes by saying: “I'm outraged beyond belief at the disdain with which this government treats me and the people like me who are struggling to live on a pension in poor health.”

Norma Schmidt speaks for an awful lot of Ontarians with her testimony before the committee—not that long ago; I guess the week before we had our Thanksgiving break. Then yesterday, we had clause-by-clause. Again, two hours were set aside for clause-by-clause to deal with this bill, and there were amendments proposed and the government supported none of the amendments.

One of the amendments, interestingly, was one that we supported, an amendment put forward by the third party, the member for Toronto–Danforth. There is a concerning part of this legislation that allows the government to actually disqualify people from the rebate. They've gone all across the province, the Premier now telling her beautiful story—well, the minister—you'd think that Ontario lived in Shangri-La when it comes to energy policy, when you listen to him speaking over there. But the Premier and the minister went around the province talking about this 8% rebate that every ratepayer is eligible for; no ands, ifs or buts about it. But then they build into the legislation the ability for the minister to actually disqualify certain persons or parties who don't meet a criteria. Is it all in or is it just the ones that the Liberals want to be in? So the amendment would have removed that section from the legislation, but the government voted against it.

1620

Now, I honestly thought that I may have had some support from the member from Kitchener Centre on an amendment that we proposed. It may have been a little bit tongue-in-cheek, but we were going to rename the act. Instead of—what do we call it here?—An Act in respect of the cost of electricity—whatever they call it; they've got their own name for it—we were going to name it after Raymond Cho, who won the by-election in Scarborough–Rouge River.

Let me assure you, Speaker, and all of those people in Ontario, that if Raymond Cho had not won the election in Scarborough–Rouge River—if in fact the Liberal candidate had won the election in Scarborough–Rouge River—we wouldn't be talking about an 8% rebate on the provincial portion of the HST on your hydro bill today. There would be no rebate, because they would have just kept on carrying on the way they have been, ignoring the needs and the desires of the people of Ontario. They would have gone on ignoring the plight that they have put the people of Ontario in. They would have gone on ignoring the pain that people are going through, people who have to make a decision: Do they heat or do they eat? People who are going to food banks because they have to make a choice: "Do we pay the hydro bill?" If they pay the hydro bill and they don't get their electricity cut off, they then have to go to the food bank because they can't afford the month's groceries. They can't get through the month.

That is not me making that up. I have that from a lady who works at the food bank in Eganville who, earlier this year, told me how difficult it is in Eganville. In fact, they ran out of supplies at the food bank because they just didn't have enough on the shelves. When she would ask people why so many people are coming to the food bank, she would be told, "Well, it's because we had to pay the hydro bill. We can't get the hydro cut off. We need the electricity for the children, to bathe the children, for hot water to wash, to do laundry—all of those kinds of things."

You've got to have it. You've got to be able to heat your homes. You've got to have the furnace running. But if they paid that hydro bill, they didn't have the money for groceries.

This is Ontario, Speaker.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Not the Third World.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is not some Third World impoverished country. This is Ontario, one of the richest societies on the globe. But government policy has driven more and more people into this predicament—government energy policy, not some catastrophic world event. It is the policies of the Liberal government that have put people's backs to the wall in Ontario.

Speaker, I don't know that we normally talk about people's ages around here, but I know you're not the youngest person of the Legislature, and I know that you were around and you remember—you may have even owned a car before that time, but if you didn't, certainly your parents did, prior to 1973—when the licence plate

of your car in Ontario said, "The Province of Opportunity."

You know, they should probably bring out the new licence plates for Ontario today, courtesy of the Liberal government. I'm sure they would give a nice fat contract to some Liberal-friendly firm who had made significant donations to the party. They would give them a contract to produce a new licence plate in the province of Ontario—

Mr. Robert Bailey: What would it say?

Mr. John Yakabuski: —one that would say, "Ontario: The Province of Energy Poverty"—no longer the province of opportunity, but the province of energy poverty. Today, you can get pictures of the sports team you represent, or the picture of the loon or whatever. They could have pictures on the two sides, the corners of the licence plate, possibly one of George Smitherman and maybe one of Dalton McGuinty or Kathleen Wynne. Premier Wynne could have her picture on the licence plates all across Ontario. Every car that drove the roads of Ontario would sport her image because it is this government that has put people into that condition. Energy poverty is one of the biggest problems facing people in Ontario today, and it is this government that created it.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Energy Poverty: Yours to Discover.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Energy Poverty: Yours to Discover, my friend from Windsor says. I'll tell you, there are an awful lot more people discovering what energy poverty is under this government.

Let's talk about the rebate itself. They've characterized this rebate as somehow going to save the day—an 8% rebate—and all of a sudden, people aren't going to suffer from high hydro bills anymore. I actually think it has worked in reverse. Their strategy, their public relations game, was to try to get people to think, "Okay, the Liberals are actually helping us." And what has actually happened is that people have started to pay more and more attention to their hydro bills, and all across the province more and more people than ever before are complaining vociferously about their hydro bills, because not only are they finding it difficult, they are becoming more angry than ever.

They feel they've been not only taken to the cleaners, that they have been fleeced by this government when it comes to electricity bills, but that they have been insulted. On top of that, they have been insulted: "After what you've done to me over the last 13 years, when electricity rates have gone up by more than 400%, you're telling me now that I should be sending a thank you letter or a card of gratitude to the Premier of Ontario because you're going to put a rebate on my bill of 8%, the provincial portion of the HST, and I should be eternally grateful for your generosity?" I think not. And that's not what the people are saying.

In fact, I don't think we've ever seen more petitions received in our members' offices. I know that the members on the opposite side here are hearing the same story. They're just not allowed to stand up in the House

and talk about it because, when it comes to being critical of government policy, they're muzzled. They're not allowed to criticize government policy—absolutely not allowed to.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You've been on the opposition benches too long, John.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And I see the Minister of the Environment, who is obviously a member of cabinet. He knows how that works. They're not going around criticizing government policy. You criticize government policy and there are two things that are going to happen: If you're in cabinet, you're out of cabinet, and if you're not in cabinet, that's a permanent condition that you'll experience. You'll never be in cabinet.

The Premier controls every one of those members to go out and spread the same fictitious message that somehow they actually care about—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We have a point of order. I recognize the Minister of the Environment on a point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think the words “fictitious message” are trying to say something through the backdoor that you can't say parliamentarily.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To the minister, I didn't hear it. However, if the member cares to withdraw, I will accept his withdrawal.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't care to withdraw. The word “fictitious” has never been demonstrated to be unparliamentary in this House before. I'm not sure why it would be today, so let's just move along. “Fictitious” is in the mind of the beholder and is in the mind of the witness. They could be writing a book about the great Liberal Premiers of history, but as I've said in this House before, I don't read fiction. It's the same kind of thing, Speaker. Someone might believe that there was actually a great Liberal Premier, but I don't.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I appreciate the narrative but I would ask that the member now stick to the bill that is being debated. I would appreciate that the comments made by the member pertain specifically to that bill. Thank you very much.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. The point I am trying to make is that the Liberals keep going around spreading a message that is nothing but talking points. It is not based in fact; it is based in Liberal talking points, and the people of Ontario have not been fooled. They've not been fooled by this rebate. It is what it is. It's 8% on a hydro bill that has gone up four times in the last 13 years—400 versus eight. It is a pittance. Norma Schmidt had it right: She called it a “sham.” That's Norma Schmidt's word, not mine, right in Hansard, Speaker. I won't be able to find it without digging out my glasses, and I haven't got time.

The point being, again, we are going to support this legislation because we believe that any help that is going to be delivered to the people of Ontario is something that is sorely needed, but this is too little, too late. They have

damaged the people of Ontario irreparably with their high hydro energy-cost policies, and the people of Ontario, I am absolutely convinced, are not going to let them get away with it. They are not going to accept that this is somehow—the price of forgiving the Liberals. They'll remember this party in 2018.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is actually my first opportunity to speak to Bill 13, which has been sort of rushed through the House at the speed of, “Let's get this done.”

We came back this fall with a speech from the throne. The government wanted to reset the agenda, wanted to set a new path. Having spent some time in our ridings through the summer, the number one issue that I heard everywhere I went was the cost of hydro continuing to go up, and the sale of Hydro One. So I and most of my colleagues truly expected that the government would listen to the 83% of Ontarians who do not want them to continue with selling off Hydro One. We thought that the government would listen and bring forward some meaningful relief for people who have a really tough time paying their hydro bills.

Well, we got a speech from the throne that confirmed that they were going full steam ahead with the selling of Hydro One. It didn't matter what 83% of the people of Ontario had to say. The Liberals know better and this is all that matters.

It also became clear that all we were going to get was 8% off. They often use that they are taking the HST off. The HST was put on our electricity bill against the wishes of the NDP, and that represents 13%, Speaker, not 8%. What we are getting through this bill is an 8% discount on our hydro bill. How long this rebate, or discount, is going to be applied, we don't know. For a lot of people, it's not going to be meaningful enough to help them. For some, the 8% is welcome. A lot of people will welcome the 8%. For a lot of people, it is very low.

I would like to start with a constituent who reached out to me yesterday. I cannot share his name but I can share his story. He is from Sudbury. He had called the Red Cross because he could not make his hydro payment. The Red Cross answered him that they were out of funds. They are on a yearly basis. They start on April 1 and, between now and March 31, although they have a mandate to help people pay their hydro bill to avoid disconnection, they are out of funds. All the Red Cross could do was to ask the utility to hold off on disconnection, which they did not do. So he was disconnected yesterday anyway from the utility provider, which means the place that he's been living at for the last five years is in jeopardy. But you also have to realize that yesterday the high in Sudbury was eight degrees. It did not take long at all for his home to get really cold.

That's the reality of a lot of my constituents in northern Ontario. It is eight degrees in your house and you have no power. You have no money to pay for the reconnection fees that come if you ever want to gain your power again.

Another constituent, whose name is Ron Corbeil, called to express that something has to be done to stop the sale of Hydro One because, he says, it belongs to the people of Ontario. He strongly believes that the government of Ontario should be held accountable for going ahead with the sale without the consent of the citizens of this province. Mr. Corbeil is fully aware that they did not campaign during the last election—the Liberals did not campaign to sell Hydro One, yet this is what they're going ahead and doing. He wants them to be held accountable because this is not what he wanted to vote for.

Another man from my riding, Mr. John Ross, and his partner actually came to see me in my office because they wanted an update on their Ontario Electricity Support Program, OESP. I can tell you, Speaker, that we help everybody we can whom we think could benefit from OESP. We helped a lot of them fill out the form because, let me tell you, this is not user-friendly. You have one letter that is capitalized or not capitalized or two spaces or one space between your name, and you are done.

Mr. John Vanthof: The computer kicks it back.

M^{me} France Gélinas: You're not going to get your rebate because the computer—exactly—kicks it back.

I have very good people in my office. They fill those out for anybody we can help. So those people were coming back to see what their application has—like many others, they are not eligible because they make slightly over \$28,000 a year. This is their first year of retirement and already the increasing utility costs make it really hard for them to manage their budget. When they retired, they had made a budget. They had figured out how much they were going to pay for electricity, but the cost of electricity in northern Ontario and throughout Ontario shot through the roof and threw their budget into shambles.

Then, I met with Al Bechamp and I quote from what he—actually, no, he sent me an email and I'll quote from what he said: "There is no way a for-profit company will make rates any lower than they are right now—and right now they are on the verge of being unaffordable." He goes on to say, "MCTV News in Sudbury has said that 8% of the people at Sudbury Hydro are behind in their bills. This is only going to increase." He goes on to say that that night, MCTV had also shown stories about people going to food banks because it was either they could not pay for food or pay for hydro. It goes on to say that "it's either starve and pay their hydro or else sit in the cold and dark," like my constituent who was disconnected yesterday.

I also want to bring the story of Don Rouleau, who contacted my office in August, concerned with the high price of hydro. He asked for a copy of the petition called "Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice." He has been going around asking people to support it. People are trying as best they can to speak up to this government. They're trying to be heard. What will it take? They write letters—and I will read some of the letters. They sign petitions. Why is it that they refuse to listen?

I also have a letter from Carmen Spadafore. I'll see if I have time to put it in the record soon.

1640

Richard Miklos is a small business owner in Alban, which is in the south end of my riding, just beside the riding of my colleague John Vanthof. He attended a public meeting hosted by a citizen organization called Hydro One Not For Sale. Then he wanted to come and talk to me about hydro prices and how they are hurting his small business and other small businesses like his, and killing jobs. He goes on to say, "The sale of Hydro One will not be good for the economy."

Also, I want to put on the record Mr. Ed Bradley. Ed came to see me with his actual hydro bill. I kept a copy of it at the office. On the hydro bill, you can see that he is very, very frugal with his energy consumption. He uses as little energy as he can, and he's been very successful in using only \$26 worth of hydro. But do you know how much the delivery charges were, Speaker? A hundred dollars. So it doesn't matter that he did everything he could to reduce his energy usage down to \$26 a month; his bill is still \$126. He's wondering, how could that be?

Mr. John Vanthof: In January, it's going to go up.

M^{me} France Gélinas: To make matters worse, delivery charges in the new year, in a few months, will continue to go up. So it doesn't matter how hard people try to save energy; their bill keeps going up.

I also heard from Mr. Marcel Quesnel, who wrote to our office. He wrote, "As a customer, I am willing to pay for the hydro that I use. But not all those added charges that double my hydro bills. I am 75 years old, living on my CPP and OAS and my wife's OAS." His hydro bill this last April is now \$509.44. Everybody knows how much is the maximum you can get for CPP and how much is the maximum you can get on Old Age Security. That's a big chunk taken out of your monthly income.

I wanted to share with you a copy of a letter I received from Judy Sumner, who lives in Capreol in my riding. She was writing to the Premier but she shared it with me. It went as follows:

"When I opened the Hydro One bill for my cottage at 177 North Shore Road ... I noticed a 30% increase in the delivery charge. This was surprising," because there was an enclosed leaflet to inform her about an increasing delivery charge, but it said that it would "make a difference of \$2.45 or 2.23% increase on my total bill."

She had attached a copy of her bill. We see that the delivery charges for the month of March were \$73.26 and the delivery charges for the month of June were \$95.54. That makes a difference of \$22.32. Everybody who knows how to do math will tell you that this is a 30% increase in the delivery charge, not 2.23% like promised.

"The accompanying leaflet says that for residential seasonal customers the total increase I should see is \$2.45 or 2.2%." She says, "I realize your numbers are approximate, but \$22.32 is much bigger than \$2.45 ... much bigger than 2.2%. Has someone slipped a decimal point in the calculation or is the accompanying leaflet a piece of flagrant misinformation?" She hoped to hear

from the Premier as well as Hydro One Networks. She has yet to hear anything.

I also wanted to put on the record other ones of my constituents. This is from Art and Louise Peach from Pebblehill Place. It goes as follows:

"Dear France,

"We write to you on a matter of great concern to my family and many I have talked to over the last while. I thought the government would come to its senses before acting, but with the first block of Hydro One shares gone forever I feel compelled to express my strong feelings about the government sale.

"The sale of Hydro One shares to the private sector seems to everyone we know a horrible, bizarre error; and it's being carried out without a mandate from the people when we voted. The government is blind on this issue except for the Premier's financial adviser (the former banker who is doing well for his former colleagues; they will be happy to lend cash for the investors to buy shares). The optics are terrible.

"The logic of the sale escapes us. How can anyone think that selling 60% of an essential public utility which produces a substantial positive cash flow is a good move?

"So we need cash for infrastructure. Use that cash flow to go into a special fund for new infrastructure instead of profits for the investors who now must be licking their chops in anticipation of even more when they are able to increase electric rates. This is exactly what happened with Highway 407, which we will forever regret. Fortunately, that previous situation was not nearly as serious as the hydro one where everyone has to buy electricity, but everyone has a travel choice.

"The government must turn this around, otherwise we know it will receive a strong lashing as we head into the next election.

"I think the government has to hear (and listen to) a serious warning and we know you are one of the MPPs to stand up."

They were writing to me, but they also copied the Premier and the minister.

There was also Mrs. Debbie Humphreys. Debbie is the acting chief executive officer of OANHSS, and that stands for Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors. Their request was quite reasonable. They would like that charitable, not-for-profit and municipal long-term-care homes obtain the rebate that was announced on the provincial portion of the HST on their residential electrical bill. Bill 13 is about this. It will take 8% off of your bills. Unfortunately, that won't apply to our not-for-profit, charitable and municipal long-term-care homes.

When I asked the Minister of Health to help them get this rebate on their bill, I gave the example that the government exempts not-for-profit, charitable homes from the payment of property taxes under the Assessment Act. They were putting forward that the same wording in the Assessment Act could be used in the legislation to implement the 8% rebate. Unfortunately, that was turned down, Speaker. I don't know why, when we already

know that our long-term-care homes are so, so stretched for dollars that the not-for-profit ones, the charitable ones and the municipal homes make no profit. Every penny that goes to them is invested into the care. Why do we exempt them from getting this 8% rebate? I can assure you that the 8% rebate would be reinvested directly into care rather than going to the new shareholders of Hydro One.

I also have a letter from Mr. Herb Tooker. He is from Copper Cliff, which is not in my riding—it's in the riding of Sudbury—but he wrote to me.

"Dear France Gélinas,

"I am writing to express my concern about the Ontario government's proposed privatization of Ontario's local, publicly operated electricity utilities.

"I realize privatizing local utilities, including Hydro One, will generate revenues for the province, but I have seen no evidence there will be benefits for Ontario residents.

"Private, for-profit ownership of Hydro will mean higher rates, lower dependability, and an end to public control over this vital function. In addition, many municipalities will lose an important source of revenue to fund local programs.

"The government has made other critical energy sector decisions in the past, including the wind energy deal with the multinational Samsung, and the decision to cancel construction of two gas-fired generating stations. Both these decisions were reached in haste, and without public input. Both have cost Ontario residents billions that could have been better used to fund transportation infrastructure, requiring no sale of valuable public assets to the private sector.

"I urge you to take my concerns, and the concerns of my neighbours, to the Premier and the Minister of Finance. No one-time sell-off is worth the lasting damage privatization of public utilities will cause my community, and our province.

"Before any decision is made to privatize any more of Ontario's publicly owned hydro system, the government must undertake a public, transparent process that provides all Ontario residents an opportunity to express their views."

1650

I could go on and on with other letters, but I will go to a letter from the city of Greater Sudbury. The city of Greater Sudbury has their own utility, Greater Sudbury Hydro Inc., but the utility does not serve everybody in Sudbury. Thirty thousand of us—I'm one of them—who live within the city of Greater Sudbury are actually clients of Hydro One. So the city of Greater Sudbury had passed a resolution that they wanted the city of Greater Sudbury to enter into negotiations with Hydro One to make sure that everybody in Sudbury was going to be served by Greater Sudbury Hydro.

They wrote to the Minister of Energy on August 27, 2015, and it was a no-go. It says:

"The city of Greater Sudbury and GSU pursued discussion with Hydro One, on October 7, 2015. Dis-

cussions have occurred, however we have come to understand that there is no basis for a negotiated partnership or joint venture agreement at this time. Discussions to acquire Greater Sudbury Hydro One assets and the 30,000 Hydro One customers have ceased at this time.”

Hydro One had no intention of entering into any negotiation so that Sudbury hydro would be able to serve all of its customers. It's quite weird, because if you're on one side of the street, you're covered by the Sudbury utility; on the other side of the street, you pay about double for your distribution charge of the person across.

I see that I've run out of time. This bill will go through. We will support it, but we should have done way more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated September 28, 2016, I'm now required to put the question. Mr. Thibeault has moved third reading of Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Saved by the bell. We have a deferral slip to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly: “Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on third reading of Bill 13 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, October 19, 2016.”

Third reading vote deferred.

PROMOTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROMOTION DU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 6, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts with respect to housing and planning / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l'aménagement du territoire.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize Mr. Coe, the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to continue my discussion of Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act.

Speaker, what's clear is that affordable housing has been and continues to be the focus of discussion and concern in Whitby, Oshawa and the region of Durham. I bring forward the Durham perspective because municipal governments are on the front line of responding to community housing needs. As the former president of the Durham Region Non-Profit Housing Corp. and chair-

person of the Durham advisory council on affordable housing, I know how hard the region has worked on this issue. Regions like Durham will create affordable housing plans to guide their efforts in reducing or ending homelessness and developing a housing system that best meets local needs. What's clear is that the problems associated with affordable housing are wide and deep and any initiatives undertaken must be collaborative.

A stable and secure housing system is a shared responsibility amongst all governments, and all parties have a collective obligation to ensure there is a broad range of housing options to support all Ontarians.

While my caucus will be supporting the bill to head to committee, it's clear that Bill 7 adds a number of new costs for municipalities, including requiring enumeration of homeless people, administering the inclusionary zoning program, and inspection and enforcement of the prescribed maintenance standards in rental units or a residential complex.

My caucus wants to work with the government on Bill 7 to create a workable approach for the people of Ontario that actually works to fix the problems we've outlined in debate over the course of the last week and a half. With thousands of households continuing to struggle to make ends meet across Ontario, I and my colleagues in the caucus welcome the efforts from all levels of government to modernize housing assistance.

The state of affordable housing in Ontario and, indeed, all of Canada requires immediate action, and this was made obvious in a submission from Ontario's big city mayors. The population of the province is increasing and we read every day about record levels of household debt. We also have a relatively stagnant rental housing development sector, which is increasing housing costs. Speaker, at the end of the day, immediate action is required to address the problem. You know it, and other members of this Legislature know it. We just need to proceed.

In March 2016, the Toronto Star cited a case of a woman who suffers from PTSD and back issues. Having stable housing accommodation is extremely important for her mental health, and she is indicative of thousands of people in this province. The article referenced the fact that there are tens of thousands of families waiting for subsidized housing in Ontario, and Toronto has the largest waiting list at 90,000—a staggering number, Speaker.

Now, according to the Canadian housing association's website, wait times in Ontario range from one to 12 years—Speaker, just stay with that for a moment: one to 12 years—depending upon the type of accommodation required. Clearly, wait times are far too long. As I've noted in the past, in my earlier comments on October 5, you can't coordinate your way out of a supply problem.

The proposed bill will help update and modernize housing delivery, but an increased supply of affordable rental units is still needed to meet the rising demand in the province. It's well established. At the same time, it's also important that we take care of the affordable housing

that we already have. Currently, the capital repair backlog in non-profit and co-operative housing is extremely significant.

I recently read an informative report entitled *Affordable Housing in Ontario: Mobilizing Private Capital in an Era of Public Constraint*. This was a joint report presented by the Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance, the University of Toronto and the Munk School of Global Affairs.

According to the report, the chronic nature of the problem remains to this day. The report cites that there were 270,000 social housing units in Ontario, many of which were built decades ago and require major renovations. Estimates suggested that 70% of the units have capital reserve shortfalls, creating a liability of more than \$1.2 billion. That's \$1.2 billion, Speaker.

1700

A Toronto Community Housing spokesperson said in February of this year that money for new affordable housing is needed, but "we have to preserve what we've got"—to my earlier point. The spokesperson went on to say that 350 subsidized housing units have been boarded up because the corporation doesn't have the money to replace what needs fixing. Another 7,500 units are under threat to close by 2023 if they aren't repaired, "and another 4,000 are in critical condition."

Toronto Community Housing is North America's second-largest social housing provider and reports a \$750-million capital repair backlog. Still, there remain over 150,000 households on social-housing waiting lists across Ontario.

As buildings continue to age, units in disrepair will eventually become dangerous and unfit for habitation. Rising land and construction costs mean that it's much more cost-effective to invest in the repair of existing affordable housing than to build new units.

We recognize that there's no such thing as free housing. The Ontario PC caucus wants the affordable housing problem to be addressed, but instead of solving it, this bill may actually make some housing more unaffordable.

What's clear is that Ontarians have accomplished a great deal when it comes to getting affordable housing on the policy agenda. Going forward, it's up to all of us in this Legislative Assembly to make sure that it stays there and gets the attention it deserves.

Thank you for the opportunity to conclude my remarks, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? The member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon to you. It's a pleasure to follow my friend from Whitby—Oshawa, a gentleman who gets up at 4 in the morning and hits the gym for a couple of hours before he hops on the GO train to come down here to go to work as well dressed as he is every day. It's always a pleasure to follow my friend.

He's talking about affordable housing. We should all be thinking about affordable housing because we are in a crisis in Ontario when it comes to affordable housing.

We've been telling the government—the Wynne government, the Liberal government—for years that they should be doing something about it.

Our member Ms. DiNovo has brought in a private member's bill five times on inclusionary zoning. Finally, inclusionary zoning will be part of this bill. That's a good thing. But Speaker, if they would have brought it in when Ms. DiNovo first introduced it, we would have had something like 100,000 affordable housing units built just within the city of Toronto in the past 10 years—100,000. Think about that.

The waiting list for affordable housing in Toronto is something like equivalent to the population of Prince Edward Island. That's unheard of. We have to do more.

This bill is a good step in the right direction. However, it's so late in the process. We still need a federal housing policy. We still hope the Wynne Liberals, who have a federal cousin, a Liberal cousin in Ottawa, Mr. Trudeau—we hope that he'll bring in a national housing strategy. The provincial housing strategy is absolutely necessary. This bill needs support.

Thank you for your time this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I always enjoy it when the member from Whitby—Oshawa and Conservatives talk about housing, because I remember, when you were in municipal politics here, I was mayor of a city to the west when all of the health and social services were downloaded on municipalities by the previous Conservative government. I remember that Bob Chiarelli, whom I became friends through this period of time, was mayor of Ottawa. We were uploading health and social services and launching a major provincial-municipal partnership with our provincial NDP government in Manitoba at the time, in spite of that.

I always wonder why people end up running for the Conservatives when they were in municipal politics, because then we had the federal Conservatives. I was chair of the Big City Mayors' Caucus nationally in the dying days of the last Liberal government, when we had SCPI and finally had, for about 10 years, some very robust housing policies, non-partisan—Allan Rock, Claudette Bradshaw, Jack Layton and the NDP. We were really making progress. Then, just as we were about to seize the day, as they say, we had Prime Minister Harper, where the entire national housing initiative was completely eviscerated. You could just watch the housing dollars go down. So I always find this interesting.

We are doing a lot of good things here. We're not yet back to where we need to go, and it takes a while. I think the commitments from—to be fair about this—both the federal Liberals and the federal NDP were robust commitments on housing. I think this is an area where both the NDP and the Liberals should be working together. I wish we were doing everything every day. I worked with the member from Parkdale—High Park when I first came here because inclusionary zoning was a big thing for me as well, having had some experience with it, and I think that's collaborative.

But I love the chutzpah from the member from Whitby—Oshawa, given that, at both the provincial and federal levels of government, you would be hard pressed to find a party that spent less on housing than they did at those two levels of government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm certainly happy to stand in my place and offer my comments. I want to assure the Minister of the Environment that we wonder why people join your party too. So we're on the same level playing field.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: For the fundraisers.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, for fundraisers.

Speaker, I think I've told this House before that, in my previous life, my wife and I operated a decorating business; in fact, she still runs that business. We did get involved with helping fix up and maintain affordable housing within our area. People in Perth—Wellington, at that time, I thought were doing quite a good job—at least the people who were administering those buildings were doing quite a good job—at keeping the upkeep of those buildings up to par. Certainly, we worked on a number of projects.

I think that's something that has to be addressed quickly: the upkeep of what we have, for sure, and also determining if the money to be spent on what we have right now is worthwhile. Some of these buildings might be in that much disrepair. I haven't seen that around in my riding, but I understand that it has happened in some other ridings. Maybe the process should be to start over. So I think those things have to be determined. They should be determined sooner than later. If something is deteriorating, it doesn't go the other way; it just deteriorates faster, and it speeds up. So I think that's one of the important things that was certainly brought up by my friend from Whitby—Oshawa: that repairs or maintenance of these types of buildings should be looked at very seriously. If they can't be, if it's throwing good money after bad to look after these things, then that should be addressed as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je voulais juste ajouter, dans les deux minutes que j'ai, des commentaires face au député de Whitby—Oshawa.

Finalement, on parle de logement abordable dans notre Assemblée législative. Ça fait longtemps qu'on veut en parler. Je vous dirais que ma collègue Cheri DiNovo essaye de parler de logement abordable ici depuis au moins neuf ans. Elle essaye, précisément, de parler de zonage inclusif. Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire? Ça veut dire qu'à chaque fois qu'un nouvel appartement est construit, il y aura un nombre minimal d'appartements qui seront à prix abordable. C'est simple comme ça. Si on avait fait ça la première fois qu'elle avait présenté ce projet de loi-là, on aurait au-dessus de 100 000 logements à prix abordable déjà prêts et qui n'auraient pas coûté un sou au gouvernement. C'est le genre de proposition, c'est le

genre de loi qu'on a besoin de mettre de l'avant et qu'on avait besoin de mettre de l'avant depuis longtemps.

En même temps, le député de Whitby—Oshawa nous parle du manque d'entretien de plusieurs des logements à prix abordable.

1710

Si un logement est à prix abordable, mais qu'il est tellement en mauvais état que l'évier ne fonctionne pas, la toilette ne fonctionne pas, les fenêtres ne ferment pas, bien, ce n'est pas un logement acceptable. On veut quand même une certaine dignité. Maslow nous dit que les priorités, ce sont la bouffe et le logement. C'est une priorité pour tous les êtres humains. C'est à peu près temps que le gouvernement de la province de l'Ontario s'y penche, et j'espère que les commentaires que le député de Whitby—Oshawa a faits seront pris en conséquence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Doesn't it go back to him?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh, sorry. Forgive me. Back to the member from Whitby—Oshawa for final comments.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker. And I thank the members for Windsor—Tecumseh, Nickel Belt and Perth—Wellington and, of course, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

I spoke in my earlier comments about the importance about collaboration—collaboration of all parties—to address the substantial issues of affordable housing as we move ahead with Bill 7. What I heard out of the additional comments from those honourable members were constructive comments, but they were also offered in a spirit of collaboration. I think there's a common understanding, as I said earlier, that we all want the affordable housing problem addressed. It touches all sectors of our community: youth, seniors and families.

As we've all read in the preparation of this debate, particularly the most recent reports from the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and their wait-list report, that list is growing, and it's growing every day. So we need not only collaboration from all parties in this Legislature; we need investments from all levels of government because at the end of the day municipalities can't do it alone. I know I have colleagues in this House who, like myself, served at the municipal level. We've struggled with developing affordable housing plans and the implementation of those. As they well know, there's only so many available tax dollars to effect this.

In summary, Speaker, I think this bill is a good start. I look forward to discussing it further as it reaches committee and providing some suggested amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is, as always, an honour to rise in the House and to add my voice to the debate, which doesn't seem much of a debate. I'm struck by the collaborative nature and the tone of debate, which makes it a little bit nicer to participate in, frankly, and also to

listen to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, as well as the members from Whitby–Oshawa and Windsor–Tecumseh, who have a background in municipal politics, infuse their thoughts and their ideas into the debate. That's where we have to be. That's the mindset and that's the space that I think will get us further along on this bill, Bill 7, as it deals with affordable housing in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to go through a couple of notes here, Speaker: some information that's been gathered by our wonderful researchers for the sake of those tuning in today. The bill is Bill 7. It is titled Promoting Affordable Housing Act, and it's second reading.

What is affordable housing? Affordable housing, under the provincial policy statement, states that:

“‘Affordable’ means:

“(a) in the case of ownership housing, the least expensive of:

“(1) housing for which the purchase price results in annual accommodation costs which do not exceed 30% of gross annual household income for low- and moderate-income households; or

“(2) housing for which the purchase price is at least 10% below the average purchase price of a resale unit in the regional market area;”

“(b) in the case of rental housing, the least expensive of:

“(1) a unit for which the rent does not exceed 30% of gross annual household income for low- and moderate-income households; or

“(2) a unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the regional market area.”

That's the technical definition of what affordable housing is. You're welcome very much. Now try to go and find some, in urban areas mainly.

Speaker, you and I come from the same area, as well as my colleagues from Windsor, where I think we're fortunate in some sense that this isn't as pervasive of an issue as it would be in some of the larger urban centres, like Toronto, of course, Mississauga, Hamilton, Ottawa and other areas around the province. We have, I would say, just recently experienced down in southwestern Ontario a resurgence of our real estate market, where prices are starting to go up. Home sales have risen. There's a lot of interest in our region, so we're starting to see some pressure on the real estate market and the housing stock. That's indicative of the calls that we're starting to get, as well, into our respective community offices. I know that we're getting calls not only from residents but from municipal leaders who are looking for some assistance, sounding the alarm that the pressure that they're feeling to provide these affordable housing units is becoming more and more difficult; therefore the need, obviously, for a bill of this sort to provide some remedy, to try to facilitate the increase of stock into affordable housing.

The pillar of this bill rests on one of the provisions called inclusionary zoning—to be honest, Speaker, not a term that I was ever familiar with prior to being elected in this House. I'm just being honest. I never really knew

what inclusionary zoning was. But once you start to understand what the theory is behind it and what the results are if it is implemented, you understand that this is something that is a really important and powerful tool when it comes to addressing affordable housing. What does it do? Well, it mandates that a certain percentage of new home construction and residential construction be allocated to that very definition that I gave you at the beginning—the affordable housing segment. It's something that certainly those who are in the anti-poverty movement, those who are in the affordable housing movement, the co-operative housing movement—people who are in this universe—have advocated for for a very long time, and, frankly, its time has come.

Speaker, I want to give credit to our member from Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo, who sets a couple of records in this place. I think she is the member who has had, as an opposition member, the most private member's bills passed. She also has to be up there in terms of having tabled private member's bills. She has a strong track record in terms of identifying issues, and that's evident in the fact that she introduced a couple of different incarnations of inclusionary zoning bills, dating back to 2009. She's got five bills dealing with inclusionary zoning and affordable housing under her belt, so to speak. We heard from our colleague the member from Windsor–Tecumseh that had those bills been enacted back when she first proposed them, it would have gone a long way, to date, to address the affordable housing issue. Toronto would now have 12,000 additional affordable housing units if it had been included back in the day.

The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore also had a bill, Bill 39, that included inclusionary zoning, back in 2014, something that could have gone a long way to addressing the issue two years ago.

Nevertheless, here we are, Speaker, dealing with the issue again. Hopefully, this time it will have the political will and the support and be given the priority by the government to actually address the issue, because we know that municipalities are asking for it.

Speaker, back in the day, in 1999, under the previous Progressive Conservative government, social housing was downloaded to municipalities, something that put an incredible burden onto their delivery and their ability to deliver, something that they continue to struggle with today. We don't know whether that was the right move or the wrong move. Given the results that we face today with the backlog and the waiting lists and the degradation of the stock that currently exists, we probably should have had a different plan. Whether it should have been maintained as a provincial responsibility and given the appropriate resources—we most likely would have not been in this position, frankly.

1720

Unfortunately, like so many other bills, Bill 7 looks okay on the surface—and that's what our concern is. Because many of the details are left to regulation, we won't know whether Bill 7 turns into a really responsive

bill or whether some of the regulations burden it down to the extent that it actually doesn't give the municipalities the ability or the flexibility to address their concerns and their stock.

New Democrats, of course, welcome the inclusionary zoning provisions of the bill, something that, as I stated, we've long fought for—I might add, against some government resistance. When it was our opportunity to amend bills like Bill 73, the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, which dealt with growth and urban sprawl—there were no inclusionary zoning provisions in that bill. However, at committee, New Democrats again saw the opportunity to infuse that important aspect into the bill. It was voted down. Here is another incidence and an example where we could have addressed this issue a whole lot earlier than we are today, and it would have done a whole lot of good for the people who are out there waiting for affordable housing and searching for affordable housing.

Speaker, there are some worrying aspects of the bill, in that it gives municipalities authority over the structure of their social housing agencies, including the power to potentially privatize or dissolve the agency. So our question is quite straightforward: What would the government's intentions be within this provision? Why is it that you're providing some guidance, you're providing the priority, yet you're giving municipalities the ability to potentially abandon or abdicate their responsibility to provide social housing and privatize it or completely dissolve it? That's incredibly worrisome for us, as an opposition party, but also for those who are advocating on behalf of folks who are looking for affordable housing.

The bill also allows municipalities to give cheques to people in need of housing instead of providing actual housing. This flexibility could be good for some tenants in some contexts, but there are certainly risks, given that these portable housing benefits might not be enough to provide actual housing for tenants. Will the money even benefit tenants, or will it simply flow into the pockets of landlords through rent increases?

There's another glaring omission in this bill, dealing with affordable housing: There are no provisions in the bill to deal with rent control. It's another issue that I think is important, something that should be addressed. Not only is the cost of owning a home or renting a home increasing every day—juxtaposed with just the basic costs of living. We hear every day that the cost of hydro is making it absolutely impossible for people to make ends meet. They have to decide whether to turn on the lights or to eat, to pay for the basic necessities of life. So we would love the government to address that issue. It might not make its way into this bill. I would imagine that at some point during the committee process, New Democrats will attempt to address the issue either through amendment or otherwise, but it's something that we had. It is something that addressed the affordability of housing in the past, but it's long gone from the rolls of legislation in this province, and we would certainly like to see it addressed.

The Liberal government promised to eliminate vacancy decontrol and restore rent control prior to 2003. But it's been, of course, over 13 years, and this continues to be with Bill 7. An overall theme of this bill is the belief that the market alone can provide affordable housing, as if in clearing a few regulations and liberalizing some of the by-laws, the private sector might magically start to build lots of affordable homes. While New Democrats want the removal of regulatory barriers for affordable housing, the market alone cannot solve the affordable housing issue. The federal and provincial governments obviously must step up with more funding to get housing built in the province.

Unfortunately, Ontarians are still suffering from the effects of federal Liberal cuts to housing in the 1990s and provincial downloads by the PCs. We're left with a legacy that, of course, we continue to deal with today. That's why it's so important, I believe, to take the long approach and the long view to legislation. We're still dealing with the effects, today, in 2016, of decisions that have been made and the ramifications of those decisions by governments in the mid-1990s.

I just had my 39th birthday—

Applause.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much—in October. You can all send me a card next year. Get me the same thing you got me last year; I see that.

At that time, I was just entering my teens. Here we are today, decades later, and the problems are getting worse, despite the evidence and despite the measures that we know work. It's one of the measures of frustration that I have in this job that boggle the mind. When you find consensus, as we have in this place, what happens? How is it that we lose our bearings and good legislation gets off the rails, for what I can only imagine are political purposes? The time has come, obviously, for us to address this issue. This bill does have, we think, some positive effect but, again, we're cautiously optimistic.

Bill 7 allows municipalities to potentially drag their feet in creating second-unit policies under their official plans. We know municipalities' official plans are their roadmap, with waypoints to communicate with their communities and developers as to where they're going. A large extent of that is mandated by the provincial government. That's why we believe that municipalities should address the issue and should remove the needless and unfair barriers and costs preventing the construction of new affordable housing. That's what we hope this bill does—again, so much to be left to regulation.

I always look forward to the committee process, where we bring in experts, where we hear from them as to what will work, what regulations will protect their ability to build, because we certainly don't want to stymie any development. We want to make sure, if there's housing that needs to be built, the pressures on builders allow them to build this in—literally; no pun intended.

We also have to be straightforward with our intentions and our priorities here, and that's going to take some political will. I don't know who the champion of this bill is on the government side, but I think that might be

something that they might consider—to get out there to broadly consult with the public. I'm not talking about hiring private consultants. We've seen that that doesn't prove to be the best value for money. I'm saying to get out there on the road, on the street, in the communities with municipal leadership, with people on the ground, and have those discussions to signal quite clearly that this is something that you're going to put a lot of effort into; you're going to put the appropriate resources to develop affordable housing stock in the province and to maintain it. That's a strong signal. That's something that I think has been lacking.

1730

We've had bills come forward by opposition members. We've had bills come forward by members of the government. I hate saying "backbench members," but they were backbench members. When a bill comes forward from cabinet, from the government, and it has a champion, that sends a true signal to those in that universe that something is going to happen and we should prepare for it and it will see the light of day. When we're dealing with a billions-of-dollars industry, as housing is, I think it's quite important that the government do that and work clearly with all parties involved. It is our hope that they certainly do that.

I'll reiterate again that the provision in this bill that will have the most impact is the inclusionary zoning mandate. It's something that New Democrats have long fought for. It would be a recognition of this government and all of our acknowledgement as elected officials that it's time that we do this and that it is our responsibility to make it happen. It would also be a recognition, and should be a recognition, that we know that times are tough out there and that people are struggling to make ends meet and that your government is there to help their lives a little bit, to help them out and to ensure that in Ontario—we know Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Housing is way up there; a roof over your head is way up there. We can at least do that. We can at least—

Hon. Michael Coteau: I thought you were wrapping up.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I am wrapping up. We can at least support that primary need—and really, primal need—that in this day and age, the government has the resources, the knowledge and the commitment to ensure that people are taken care of when they need it the most.

We've seen evidence that when that does happen in other jurisdictions, you're not only supportive of their immediate needs, but it launches people into success and growth and a progressive ability to get back on their feet and to live a good-quality life, and that's really what it is all about.

I appreciate the time, Speaker, and I look forward to the comments from my colleagues.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A point of order: I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, as you know, I'm a fan of the Detroit Tigers, so I'm non-partisan. At the end of four: Blue Jays 2, Cleveland nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It's not a point of order, but I appreciate the update. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I too appreciate the update. I mean, short of getting TV sets in here, at least we have this information. Maybe that will be something we can debate at another time.

I'm very pleased to join in on the conversation this afternoon on Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act. I'd like to comment on something that was said by the member for Essex, who spoke very eloquently on this issue. He talked about downloading. I can remember back about 15 years ago when the then Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris decided to download the issue of affordable housing to the municipalities.

I can tell you that in my community, we used a different D-word. They referred to it as "dumping," and folks in my community were none too happy when this happened, but I live in a very caring, very innovative community, and my municipal leaders rose to the occasion. They absorbed this responsibility and they answered the call.

What we have right now in Kitchener-Waterloo is a very good mix of private and public affordable housing. I'm always pleased to meet with the stakeholders in my community, whether it is the municipal leaders, the people who are building the housing, the people who are maintaining it or those who are living in the housing. I know after chatting with them that they are very enthusiastic about Bill 7. They're looking forward to the number of affordable housing units that can be provided now, the period of time that the affordable housing units must be maintained as affordable, requirements and standards that affordable housing units must meet, and measures and incentives that may be provided to support inclusionary zoning.

I too am looking forward to this bill getting in the committee phase where we can chat about it more. I believe it's going to go a long way in assuring that we are going to have a long-term plan, a long-term strategy for addressing the issue of homelessness in Ontario, and I encourage all of my colleagues here in the House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and add some comments to the member from Essex. We're looking forward to this bill coming to the committee stage so that a lot of comments and amendments can be made at that time by our critic and by others who have issues on this. We're looking forward to hearing from the public as well, people who take advantage of public housing and live there, as well as the municipalities that administer it.

I would point out that the government has had 13 years or more to fix the wait-list. We have at least some 170,000 families right now waiting for housing in this province—the highest it's ever been, I might point out. We've seen millions of dollars of housing money wasted.

I know that one of our critics in the past has talked about luxury seven-day vacations to South Africa. This bill, as I understand it, still has no measures to stop the misuse of public money intended for social housing. Bill 7 also adds new costs to municipalities, including requiring enumeration of homeless people, administering the inclusionary zoning program and enforcement.

This government's policies, from spiralling hydro rates to high taxes to increasing development charges on new homes and rentals, are also making life more unaffordable for all Ontarians, especially the people who require social housing and that type of housing.

The previous version of this affordable housing strategy promised annual reports that would include performance indicators, yet these were never released. The only real measure that we have every year is that the wait-list continues to increase. We recognize, on this side of the House, that there's no such thing as free housing. We want the affordable housing problem addressed but, instead of solving it, this bill may actually make it worse and more unaffordable.

I look forward to the rest of the debate and, as other members have said, until this bill goes to committee to improve it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Since we are talking about affordable housing, I just wanted to mention that we have people here from co-op housing. They are having a reception, so they would like to see all the members of the Legislature stop by the reception and hear some of what they have to say around housing.

I'd like to thank the member from Essex for his comments today. He covered a lot of ground in the short period of time that he had to speak. Being from our region, from Windsor and Essex county, one of the things that we boast, aside from the beautiful area, especially our waterfront, is the affordable housing that we have. In fact, my home is in Windsor. It's very similar to the size of my brother's home here in Toronto, and I can tell you that my home was a small fraction of the cost of what it is here in Toronto. So we know a thing or two about affordable housing in Windsor and Essex county. But I think what any municipality really could use help with—and this bill does address some of it, although it doesn't go far enough and there are some concerns—is that for those people who are in a lower income situation, have unstable finances and need to have affordable housing, we need to make sure that housing is protected and well taken care of. Often what we find in housing that's rent-geared-to-income or in affordable housing is that those units are not kept up appropriately, and they need to be. They deserve proper living conditions like everyone else. We need to make sure that as people become financially stable, they then move out of that housing and make room for those who need that type of stability until they're able to get on their feet, move along and clear out a unit for someone else. We need to make sure that we're not having private organizations come in and snap up

these units and start charging higher rates so people can't afford to live there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of my constituents of Cambridge to speak to Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act.

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I wanted to address a comment that was made by a member of the third party today and during the last debate of this bill. He raised concerns about proposed changes to the Housing Services Act that, if passed, would give service managers the authority to transfer social housing assets. Currently, municipalities are required to get approval from the minister if they want to merge, dissolve or sell their social housing agencies. The concept of getting ministerial consent for the transfer of social housing projects is inconsistent with the notion of local decision-making by the service managers to meet local housing needs. That's very important, Mr. Speaker.

The proposed changes to allow service managers the authority to transfer social housing assets would increase their ability to generate revenues for reinvestment in new social and affordable housing assets. Furthermore, should Bill 7 be passed, a ministerial directive would be issued to ensure that tenants are protected and consulted, and that all revenue derived from the sales would be re-invested for housing purposes. Lastly, service managers would still be required to meet their service level standards under the Housing Services Act, 2011, which requires that municipalities maintain a certain number of rent-geared-to-income social housing units in their service areas.

This legislation, if passed, will help to deliver efficient, people-centred housing programs to reduce wait-lists and help Ontario's most vulnerable gain access to stable housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Essex for final comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the member for Kitchener Centre, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton and my colleague from Windsor West for contributing and commenting.

One of the other little things here that I will highlight is that there is no requirement or guideline suggesting that the provision of affordable housing should be permanent. The lack of such guidelines has become a problem in Ontario, as multi-decade agreements expire and affordable housing is inevitably put at risk.

In that lies a real problem. If we are to deem and to have stock of affordable housing, and then that affordable housing is to expire and be up for grabs, as the member for Windsor West has identified, then we start to lose affordable housing stock, and it starts to degrade. That number gets smaller, inevitably. We would love the government to at least explain how this lack of permanency addresses what we know is a long-term problem and what we know they are not going to be able to catch up

with today. So what's their multi-year plan, going forward, if we are not to ensure that affordable housing be made permanent?

It's kind of a simple question. I know it's not going to be a simple answer. But certainly, there has to be some balance found, and it comes down to priorities. Either we deal with this issue and really put our hearts into it, because it is the right thing to do in Ontario—something that I think we should be embarrassed about, given the numbers that exist out there—or we be truthful with the effects of this bill, because it certainly won't go far enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Applause.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Wow. After all these years, I have friends.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with my friends the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I think that gives us each about five minutes.

I just want to agree with the member from Essex and thank him for his comments. I've been a long-time believer in inclusionary zoning. When David Crombie and I were together at the Canadian Urban Institute, this was an issue of great importance to us.

When some of the members from Windsor were speaking, it was reminding me of my days in Winnipeg, because that's an old industrial city that has a lot of similarities to Windsor and to Hamilton and had seen much of its industrial base in the 1990s disappear—and a lot of hardship in those industrial cities.

I'd like to say a few things that are within the scope of this bill but aren't your standard talking points, because we so rarely get to talk to each other about some of the things that we feel strongly about.

I have the great privilege of being the member of Parliament for Toronto Centre, which is going through the biggest vertical expansion of any piece of real estate in Canadian history—which is a bit odd, when you've been the mayor of the city of Winnipeg, which hadn't seen a developer in 20 years and had more parking lots and low-value land that no one wanted to build anything on.

In my life, it's a great privilege to have been the mayor of one of Canada's most modestly financed and poorer cities, and now being a member of provincial Parliament for the largest and richest city.

You have a sense of possibility here. I've always said there are things that would happen in Toronto that can't happen anywhere else in Canada. You simply don't have the wealth and the explosion.

I agree that the member for Parkdale–High Park played a really pivotal role in getting inclusionary zoning, and it's a really good thing. I have eight towers of about 30 or 40 stories or higher going up just two blocks from here. If three or four or five stories of each

of those buildings were affordable housing, that would solve the housing shortfall.

As an MPP, I have a housing plan and a neighbourhood plan for all 11 neighbourhoods, because my view is that while people may be homeless, they're not neighbourhood-less. All the people I represent who don't have a key to a safe place at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, certainly live their lives in context in the neighbourhood, and we forget that. I work very strongly with the neighbourhood plan, but we need to elevate this to do more.

What would some of those “mores” look like? Well, why don't we have a settlement strategy and a population strategy in Canada? Cities like London and Windsor and some of the northern cities simply have a lot of capacity in schools and facilities. We need to start looking at the infrastructure that pushes population back into those mid-sized communities. Downtown Hamilton is about 50% surface parking right now. There are huge opportunities. While things like inclusionary zoning—my friend from—oh my God, he's got a long name here—Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, in bringing this bill forward originally, really understood that, but for me, why aren't we driven by a population strategy? Windsor and Hamilton are in the centre of the great urban agglomeration in Canada, compared to the place that I was mayor of. I can tell you how hard it is to revitalize an urban centre, and how important housing is. But a larger population strategy, which you've seen in some parts of the US and some parts of Europe, is to redeploy population and to look at those kinds of incentives. That deals with zoning incentives. It deals with the location of government offices and infrastructure.

The sad thing is that we're living in a time when almost every major industrial country has one super-city. I was just in the UK. London has about 80% of the growth. Even formerly large cities like Leeds and Manchester are just now catching up. Russia is Moscow and St. Petersburg, the only two cities growing. Then Paris—we're becoming almost single supercentres of urban development, and we need to do something about that.

But you know, we almost lost 24,000 co-operative housing affordable units because the previous federal government cancelled the operating agreements. I'm not trying to pick a partisan fight here. I've already lost two. Two of my largest co-ops don't have operating agreements anymore, and sadly, they expired before. But that's 24,000 affordable housing units that are at risk.

It just seems to me that in Toronto, living here and having been mayor of a poor place, amongst all this wealth and all this development—this extraordinary boom where one city block in my constituency, in a year, grows a bigger population than many small cities—we've got to come up with better solutions. We've got to do things like co-housing. We've got to take on these kinds of initiatives for community land banks and housing banks. I could give you about 20 things that we could do that would create a massive amount of housing, beyond

inclusionary zoning. I just wish we got the forum to do that more often.

I think this is a great law; I think it's good. I hope, because it's an innovative, new idea, relatively speaking, that it's the first of many, because, Mr. Speaker, I still feel embarrassed when I go to bed every night and I know how many of my constituents don't have a key to a safe place to live. To me, that's inexcusable.

I still think—well, I'm hopeful for this. I hope this is the beginning of new ideas, not the end, because we have a lot of ways to solve these problems.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I recognize the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's with great pride that I rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act.

As has been mentioned earlier this afternoon, I had a private member's bill before this Legislature that, among other things, spoke to the provision of inclusionary zoning. One of the reasons why I ran to be a member of this Legislature was that I knew we had a Premier who is committed to municipal reform and to the provision of the ability for municipalities to have inclusionary zoning. So I'm very pleased to be able to rise and speak to this today.

Mr. Speaker, I actually cut my teeth, as one of my first jobs after graduating from university, as the executive director of a non-profit housing corporation under a program that was done by the then NDP government. That was a great program; it built a lot of housing. It was also a little bit of the old style of program: a lot of government money, top-down, to build affordable housing.

I think there's still a role for that, but inclusionary zoning is a way to help all boats rise. In a community such as Toronto, where there is so much new wealth generation being created through real estate development, it means that as these towers pop up all around us, we know there will be a range of residents in the buildings: those who require affordable housing, those who are renting a unit there, those who are buying a unit there.

Inclusionary zoning will provide the municipality with the flexibility to pass the right types of zoning bylaws within its jurisdiction—and it will be up to each municipality to decide whether they choose to opt for this. But once they put in place this mechanism, every developer, every property owner who seeks to redevelop, to build, will know what their obligations are to provide affordable housing within that development—not cash to municipalities which might disappear elsewhere, not just a vague promise to build something, but it will be designed so it's formulaic. It will be that a percentage of that project has to be dedicated to affordable housing.

This affordable housing will take a variety of forms. Some of it might be affordable rental housing, which we certainly need. Some of it might be affordable ownership housing, which is also something that we need, as a government, and municipalities as well, to ensure—that

more opportunities for home ownership exist for people of more modest needs. We have organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Options for Homes who do this very successfully. Having a model such as the inclusionary zoning model means that these types of organizations and others will be able to participate in the development of affordable housing in partnership with those who are investing in building these great edifices all over our communities.

I think this form of affordable housing is a crucial part of the solution to addressing the affordability of home ownership and rental accommodation for Ontarians because it will be tailored to each community. Each community will have the ability to set the types of goals that are appropriate to its market and its conditions. It will guarantee that as these communities grow and develop, all the residents of various means in the communities will have access to live in these new developments.

Mr. Speaker, this is an extraordinarily important piece of legislation, one which, I agree, we've waited for far too long, but it's here now. I hope that members of all parties will support it as it goes to committee and finally comes back to the Legislature for voting. The time to provide affordable housing to Ontarians is now, and this bill will help us achieve that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's an honour for me to stand today to talk about Bill 7, the affordable housing act of 2016. I want to join the member from Toronto Centre, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and other members of the Legislature in saying that this is an act that, if passed, will really be a game-changer here in the province of Ontario, to allow municipalities to build inclusionary zoning into their plans in their municipalities, which I see as a solution to creating an Ontario that is more affordable in the long term.

There is no question in my mind that it has become somewhat expensive in certain jurisdictions in the province of Ontario. We see in Toronto the housing market has just exploded. I think it was a few years ago there were more homes and buildings and cranes in operation in the GTA than all of North America combined. It was a fact that people were using just to illustrate how big this boom has been over the last few years. But I think that with the boom, there have been some consequences as well. We have a lot of people moving into the GTA and the cost of homes has risen drastically in the last few years.

Our government has taken a response—and I would call it a holistic response—to combatting the challenges of affordability here in the province of Ontario, and we are talking about making sure that we can build affordable homes, but I think it's part of a larger narrative.

One of the reasons I, like the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, decided to run for the Liberal government was because of their legacy over the last decade-plus here in the province of Ontario when it comes to making life more affordable for people.

Back in 2009, before I was elected, this was a government that decided to look for ways to expand on education. We put forward a plan to build full-day kindergarten across the province and, at the same time, we built more university and college spots. The reason I'm mentioning these two educational pieces is because we need to make sure that if we want to continue to be prosperous here in Ontario, to allow people to develop themselves and have the ability to go out there and earn an income, education is obviously a key piece to that. The more you learn, the more you earn.

In addition to that, when we're talking about affordability, I think we could just look back at our recent economic statement and the piece we put around child care: 100,000 new spots. Again, this is about building affordability for people here in Ontario.

One of the pieces I'm most proud of as a Liberal member in this government is the work we've done recently around tuition. I know these items don't directly relate to housing but they do directly relate to affordability here in the province. We're talking about building affordable homes, and I think that by putting forward additional initiatives you allow people to have more flexibility when deciding on where they want to live.

Our government put forward a proposal to its members to look for a way to better position students here in the province of Ontario. So if you earn under \$50,000, as a family or as an individual, now your tuition will be free for college or post-secondary. The incredible thing about this piece is that we know if we have a more educated society, we will continue to develop a stronger economy.

I'll close by saying this, Mr. Speaker: With the child benefit—with over 500,000 families using it, a maximum of just over \$1,300 per year—with our full-day kindergarten, more child care spaces being opened up, free tuition and with Healthy Smiles Ontario, I think we are creating a more affordable Ontario where people have the opportunity at the end of the day, if they work hard and they try, to build an Ontario, build a life here in the province where they can participate in the economy and really position their family and their children for success in the future.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable du Gouvernement numérique Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	
Vacant	Ottawa-Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Yvan Baker, Mike Colle
Grant Crack, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Jim McDonell, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qaadri, Laurie Scott
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch